THE LETTERS OF VINCENT VAN GOGH

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VINCENT VAN GOGH

From a self-portrait of 1888.

THE LETTERS OF VINCENT VAN GOGH

TO HIS BROTHER

1872–1886

With a Memoir by his Sister-in-law
J. van Gogh-Bonger

IN TWO VOLUMES
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

VOL. I

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THIS BOOK

IS DEDICATED

TO

THE MEMORY OF

VINCENT AND THEO

" And in their death they were not divided."

SAMUEL II. 1, 23.

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PREFACE

"It would be really a remarkable book if one could see how much he (Vincent) has thought, and how he remained himself."

Letter of Theo to his mother, September 8th, 1890.

When as Theo's young wife I entered in April 1889 our flat in the Cité Pigalle in Paris, I found in the bottom of a small desk a drawer full of letters from Vincent, and week after week I saw the soon familiar yellow envelopes with the characteristic handwriting increase in number.

After Vincent's death Theo discussed with me the project that these letters ought to be published, but death took him away ere he could begin the execution of this plan.

Nearly twenty-four years passed after Theo's death before I was able to complete publication.

Much time was necessary to decipher the letters and to arrange them; this was the more difficult because often the dates failed, and much careful thought was needed before these letters were fitted into their place.

There was another reason, however, which withheld me from making them known earlier. It would have been an injustice towards Vincent to create interest in his personality ere the work to which he gave his life was recognised and appreciated as it deserved.

Many years passed before Vincent was recognised as a great painter. Now it is time his personality was known and understood.

May the letters be read with consideration.

J. VAN GOGH-BONGER.

Amsterdam,
January 1914.

THEO VAN GOGH

From a pencil sketch by Meyer de Haan [1889]

MEMOIR OF VINCENT VAN GOGH

BY HIS SISTER-IN-LAW

The family name, van Gogh, is probably derived from the small town Gogh on the German frontier, but in the 16th century the van Goghs were already established in Holland. According to the "Annales Généalogiques" of Arnold Buchelius, there lived at that time a Jacob van Gogh at Utrecht "In the Owl behind the Town Hall," and Jan Jacob's son, who lived "In the Bible under the flax market," selling wine and books, was Captain of the Civil Guard.

Their coat-of-arms was a bar with three roses, which is still the family crest of the van Goghs.

In the 17th century we find many van Goghs occupying high offices of state in Holland. Johannes van Gogh, magistrate of Zutphen, is appointed High Treasurer of the Union in 1628; Michel van Gogh, at first Consul General in Brazil, afterwards treasurer of Zeeland, belongs to the Embassy that welcomes King Charles II of England on his ascent to the throne in 1660. In about the same period, Cornelius van Gogh is a Remonstrant clergyman at Boskoop, and his son Matthias, at first a physician at Gouda, is afterwards clergyman at Moordrecht.

In the beginning of the 18th century the social standing of the family is somewhat lowered. A David van Gogh, who settled at the Hague, is a gold-wire drawer, like his eldest son Jan, who married Maria Stalvius, both belonging to the Walloon Church.

David's second son, Vincent (1729–1802), was a sculptor by profession, and is said to have been in Paris in his youth; in 1749 he was one of the Cent Suisses. With him the practice of art seems to have come into the family, together with fortune; he died single and left some money to his nephew Johannes (1763–1840), the son of his elder brother Jan van Gogh.

This Johannes was at first a gold-wire drawer like his father, but he afterwards became a Bible teacher, and clerk in the Cloister

Church at the Hague. He was married to Johanna van der Vin of Malines, and their son Vincent (1789–1874) was enabled, by the legacy of his great uncle Vincent, to study theology at the University of Leiden. This Vincent, the grandfather of our painter, was a man of great intellect and extraordinarily strong sense of duty. At the Latin school he distinguished himself and won all prizes and testimonials; "the diligent and studious youth, Vincent van Gogh, fully deserves to be set up as an example to his fellow students for his good behaviour as well as for his persistent zeal," declares the rector of the school, Mr. de Booy, in 1805. At the University of Leiden he finishes his studies successfully, and graduates in 1811 at the age of twenty-two. He makes friends; his "album amicorum" preserves their memory in many Latin and Greek verses; a little silk embroidered wreath of violets and forget-me-nots, signed, E. H. Vrydag 1810, is wrought by the hand of the girl who became his wife as soon as he got the living of Benschop. They lived long and happily together, first at the parsonage of Benschop, then at Ochten, and from 1822 at Breda, where his wife died in 1857, and where he remained until his death, a deeply respected and honored man.

VICE-ADMIRAL J. VAN GOGH

Twelve children were born to them, of which one died in infancy; there was a warm cordial family feeling between them, and however far the children might drift apart in the world, they remained deeply attached and took part in each other's weal and

woe. Two of the daughters married high placed officers, the Generals Pompe and 's Graeuwen; three remained single.

The six sons all occupied honorable positions in the world. Johannes went to sea and reached the highest rank in the navy, that of Vice-Admiral; at the time that he was commandant of the Navy Yard at Amsterdam in 1877, his nephew Vincent lived at his house for a time. Three sons became art dealers; the eldest Hendrik Vincent, "Uncle Hein" as he was called in the letters, had his business at first at Rotterdam and afterwards settled at Brussels. Cornelius Marinus became the head of the firm C. M. van Gogh, so well known in Amsterdam. (His nephews often called him by his initials C. M.). The third, who had the greatest influence on the lives of his nephews Vincent and Theo, was Vincent, whose health in his youth had been too weak to enable him to go to college, to the deep regret of his father, who based the greatest expectations on him. He opened a little shop at the Hague, where he sold colours and drawing materials, and which he enlarged in a few years to an art gallery of European renown. He was an extraordinarily gifted, witty, and intelligent man, who had great influence in the world of art at that time; Goupil in Paris offered him the partnership in his firm, which only after van Gogh joined it reached its highest renown. He settled in Paris and Mr. Tersteeg became the head of the firm in the Hague in his place. It was here that Vincent and Theo got their first training in business;

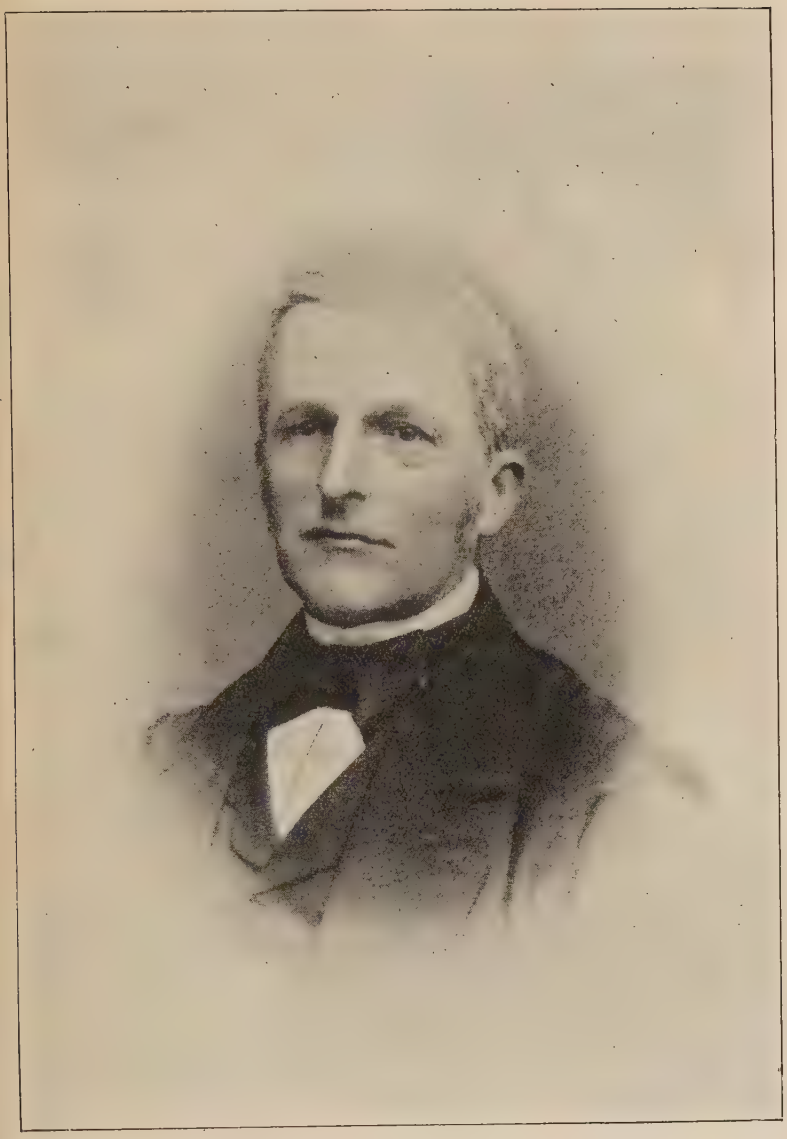
C. M. VAN GOGH

Goupil was "the house" that played such a large part in their lives, where Theo remained and made a successful career, where Vincent worked for six years, and to which his heart clung in spite of all, because in his youth it had been to him "the best, the grandest, the most beautiful in the world" (letter 332).

Only one of parson van Gogh's six sons chose the profession of his father. Theodorus (8 Febr. 1822–26 March 1885) studied theology at Utrecht, graduated, and in 1849 got the living of Groot-Zundert, a little village in Brabant on the Belgian frontier, where he was confirmed by his father. Theodorus van Gogh was a man of prepossessing appearance ("the handsome dominie" he was called by some), of a loving nature and fine spiritual qualities, but he was not a gifted preacher, and for twenty years he lived forgotten in the small village of Zundert ere he was called to other places, and even then only to small villages like Etten, Helvoirt and Nuenen. But in his small circle he was warmly loved and respected, and his children idolized him.

UNCLE VINCENT, THE ART DEALER

In May 1851 he married Anna Cornelia Carbentus, who was born in 1819 at the Hague, where her father Willem Carbentus was a flourishing bookbinder. He had bound the first Constitution of Holland and thereby earned the title of "bookbinder to the King." His youngest daughter Cornelia was already married to Vincent van Gogh, the art dealer; his eldest daughter was the wife of the well-known clergyman Stricker at Amsterdam. The marriage of Theodorus van Gogh and Anna Carbentus was a very



VINCENT'S FATHER

happy one. He found in his wife a helpmate, who shared with all her heart in his work; notwithstanding her own large family that gave her so much work, she visited his parishioners with him, and her cheerful and lively spirit was never quenched by the monotony of the quiet village life. She was a remarkable, lovable woman, who in her old age (she reached her 87th year), when she had lost her husband and three grown-up sons, still retained her energy and spirit and bore her sorrow with rare courage.

One of her qualities, next to her deep love of nature, was the great facility with which she could express her thoughts on paper; her busy hands, that were always working for others, grasped so eagerly not only needle and knitting needle, but also the pen. "I just send you a little word" was one of her favourite expressions, and how many of these "little words" came always just in time to bring comfort and strength to those to whom they were addressed. For almost twenty years they have been to myself a never failing source of hope and courage, and in this book, that is a monument to her sons, a word of grateful remembrance is due to their mother.

On the 30th of March 1852 a dead son was born at the vicarage of Zundert, but a year after on the same date Anna van Gogh gave birth to a healthy boy who was called Vincent Willem after his two grandfathers, and who in qualities and character, as well as in appearance took after his mother more than after his father. The energy and unbroken strength of will which Vincent showed in his life were, in principle, traits of his mother's character; from her also he took the sharp inquisitive glance of the eye from under the protruding eyebrows. The blonde complexion of both the parents turned in Vincent to a reddish hue; he was of medium height, rather broad shouldered, and his appearance made a strong, sturdy impression. This is also confirmed by the words of his mother, that none of the children *except* Vincent was very strong. A weaker constitution than his would certainly have broken down much sooner under the heavy strain Vincent put upon it. As a child he was of difficult temper, often troublesome and self-willed, and his bringing up was not fitted to counterbalance these faults, as the parents were very tender-hearted especially for their eldest. Once grandmother van Gogh, who had come from Breda to visit her children at Zundert, witnessed one of the naughty fits of little

VINCENT'S MOTHER

From a drawing by J. C. Gosschalk [1903]

Vincent; she who had been taught by experience with her own twelve babies, took the little culprit by the arm and with a sound box on the ears put him out of the room. The tender-hearted mother was so indignant at this that she did not speak to her mother-in-law for a whole day, and only the sweet-tempered character of the young father succeeded in bringing about a reconciliation. In the evening he had a little carriage brought around, and drove the two

THE PARSONAGE AT ZUNDERT, WHERE VINCENT AND THEO WERE BORN

women to the heath, where under the influence of a beautiful sunset they forgave each other.

Little Vincent had a great love for animals and flowers, and made all kinds of collections; of any extraordinary gift for drawing there was as yet no sign; it is only noted that at the age of eight he once modelled a little elephant of clay, that drew his parents' attention, but he destroyed it at once when according to his notion such a fuss was made about it. The same fate befell a very curious drawing of a cat, which his mother always remembered. For a short time he attended the village school, but his parents found that the intercourse with the peasant boys made him too rough, so a

THE CHURCH AT ZUNDERT

governess was sought for the children of the vicarage, whose number had meanwhile increased to six. Two years after Vincent a little daughter had been born and again two years later on the 1st of May 1857, came a son who was called after his father. After him came two sisters and a little brother. (The younger sister Willemien, who always lived with her mother, was the only one to whom Vincent wrote on rare occasions.) Theo was more tender and kind than his brother, who was four years older; he was more delicately built and finer featured, but of the same reddish fair complexion and he had the same light blue eyes, that sometimes darkened to a greenish blue.

In letter 338 Vincent himself describes the similarity and the difference in their looks, and in 1889 Theo wrote to me the following about Vincent's appearance, referring to Rodin's marble sculpture, the head of John the Baptist. "The sculptor has conceived an image of the precursor of Christ that exactly resembles Vincent. Yet he never saw him. That expression of sorrow, that forehead distorted by deep furrows, which denotes high thinking and iron self discipline, is Vincent's, though his is somewhat more sloping; the form of nose and structure of the head are the same." When I afterwards saw the marble I found in it a perfect resemblance to Theo.

The two brothers were strongly attached to each other from childhood; whereas the eldest sister, recalling youthful memories, speaks of Vincent's teasing ways. Theo only remembers that Vincent could invent such delightful games, that once they made him a present of the most beautiful rose bush in their garden, to show their gratitude. Their childhood was full of the poetry of Brabant country life; they grew up among the cornfields, the heath and the pine forests, in that peculiar sphere of a village parsonage, the charm of which remained with them all their lives. It was not perhaps the best training to fit them for the hard struggle that awaited them both; they were still so very young, when they had to go out into the world, and with what bitter melancholy, and with what inexpressible home-sickness did they long during many years for the sweet home in the little village on the heath.

Vincent came back there several times, and remained always in appearance the "country boor," but Theo, who had become

quite a refined Parisian, also kept in his heart something of the "Brabant boy" as he laughingly liked to call himself.

Like Vincent once rightly observes: "there will always remain in us something of the Brabant fields and heath," and when their father had died and mother had to leave the parsonage, he complains, "now there is none of us left in Brabant." When afterwards, in the hospital of Arles the faithful brother visited him and in tender pity laid his head on the pillow beside him, Vincent whispered: "just like Zundert," and shortly after he writes: "during my illness I have seen every room in the house at Zundert, every path, every plant in the garden, the fields around, the neighbours, the churchyard, the church, our kitchen garden behind it—and even the magpie's nest in the high acacia in the churchyard" (letter 573).

So ineffaceable were those first sunny childhood's recollections. When Vincent was twelve years old he was sent to the boarding school of Mr. Provily at Zevenbergen; about this period not a single particular has been found, except that one of the sisters afterwards writes to Theo: "Do you remember how on mother's birthday Vincent used to come from Zevenbergen and what fun we had then?" Of friends in that time nothing is known.

When he was sixteen years old the choice of a profession became urgent and in this Uncle Vincent was consulted.

The latter, who meanwhile had acquired a large fortune as an art dealer, had been obliged by his feeble health to retire early from the strenuous business life in Paris—though still financially connected with the firm—and had settled at Princenhage, near his old father at Breda, and near his favourite brother at Zundert. Generally he passed the winter with his wife at Mentone in the south of France, and on his journey thither he always stayed some time at Paris, so that he remained in touch with the business. His beautiful country house at Princenhage had been enlarged by a gallery for his rare picture collection, and it was here that Vincent and Theo received their first impressions of the world of art. There was a warm cordial intercourse between the Zundert parsonage and the childless home of Princenhage; "the carriage" from there was always loudly cheered by the children at Zundert, for it brought many surprises of flowers, rare fruits and delicacies, while on the other hand the bright, lively presence of the brother

and sister from Zundert often cast a cheerful sunbeam on the life of the patient at Princenhage. These brothers, Vincent and Theo too, who differed but one year in age, were thoroughly attached to each other, and the fact of their wives being sisters made the attachment stronger still. What was more natural than that the rich art dealer destined the young nephew who bore his name as his successor in the firm—perhaps even to become his heir ?

Thus in 1869 Vincent entered the house of Goupil & Co., at the Hague, as youngest employee under the direction of Mr. Tersteeg, now a bright future seemed to lie in store for him. He boarded with the family Roos on the Beestenmarkt, where Theo afterwards lived also. It was a comfortable home where his material needs were perfectly provided for, but without any intellectual intercourse. This he found at the homes of various relations and friends of his mother, where he often visited, i.e. the Haanebeek's, the van Stockum's and aunt Sophy Carbentus with her three daughters, one of whom married our famous Dutch painter, A. Mauve, a second the less known painter, A. le Comte. Tersteeg sent to the parents good reports about Vincent's zeal and capacities, and like his grandfather in his time, he is "the diligent studious youth" whom everybody likes.

When he had been at the Hague for three years, Theo, who is still at school at Oisterwijk (near Helvoirt, to which village their father has been called), comes to stay with him for a few days. It is after that visit in August 1872 that the correspondence between the two brothers begins, and from this, now faded, yellow, almost childish, little note it is carried on uninterruptedly until Vincent's death, when a half-finished letter to Theo was found on him, of which the desponding "que veux-tu" (what can I say) at the end, seems like a gesture of resignation with which he parted from life.

The principal events of both their lives are mentioned in the letters and are completed in this biographical notice by particulars, either heard from Theo himself, or found in the correspondence of the parents with Theo, also preserved in full. (Vincent's letters to his parents were unfortunately destroyed.) They date from January 1873, when Theo then only fifteen years old, went to Brussels to be also brought up as an art dealer.

These letters, full of the tenderest love and care for the boy who left home at such a tender age—" well Theo you are quite a man now at fifteen," says his mother in one of her letters; the boy to whom they clung so fondly, because he, more than any of the other children, repays their love with never failing tenderness and devotion, and grows up to be " the crowning glory of their old age," as they were so fond of calling him—these letters tell of all the small events of daily life at the parsonage; what flowers were growing in the garden, and how the fruit trees bore, if the nightingale had been heard yet, what visitors had come, what the little sisters and brother were doing, what was the text of father's sermon, and among all this, many particulars about Vincent.

In 1873 the latter has been appointed to the firm in London. When leaving the Hague he gets a splendid testimonial from Mr. Tersteeg, who also writes to the parents that at the gallery everybody likes to deal with Vincent—amateurs, clients, as well as painters—and that he certainly will succeed in his profession. " It is a great satisfaction that he can close the first period of his career in that way, and withal he has remained just as simple as he was before," writes mother. At first everything goes well with him in London; Uncle Vincent has given him introductions to some of his friends and he busies himself with great pleasure in his work; he earns a salary of £90 a year, and though living is expensive, he manages to lay by some money to send home now and then. Like a real business man he buys himself a top hat, " you cannot be in London without one," and he enjoys his daily trips from the suburbs to the gallery in Southampton Street in the city.

His first boarding-house is kept by two ladies, who own two parrots, the place is good but somewhat expensive for him, therefore he moves in August to the house of Mrs. Loyer, a curate's widow from the south of France, who with her daughter Ursula keeps a day school for little children. Here he spends the happiest year of his life. Ursula makes a deep impression upon him—" I never saw nor dreamt of anything like the love between her and her mother " he writes to one of his sisters, and: " love her for my sake."

He does not mention it to his parents, for he has not even confessed his love to Ursula herself,—but his letters home are radiant

with happiness. He writes that he enjoys his life so much—"Oh fulness of rich life, your gift Oh God."[1]

In September an acquaintance is going over to London and undertook to carry a parcel for Vincent, and it is characteristic to hear that it contains, among other things, a bunch of grass leaves and a wreath of oak leaves, made at home during the holidays by Theo, who has meanwhile been appointed from Brussels to the House Goupil at the Hague. Vincent must have something in his room to remind him of the beloved fields and woods.

He celebrates a happy Christmas with the Loyers, and in those days he sends home now and then a little drawing, from his house and the street and from the interior of his room, "so that we can exactly imagine how it looks, it is so well drawn," writes his mother. In this period he seems to have weighed the possibility of becoming a painter; afterwards from Drenthe he writes to Theo: "how often have I stood drawing on the Thames Embankment, as I went home from Southampton Street in the evening—and the result was nihil; had there been somebody then to tell me what perspective was, how much trouble would have been spared me, how much farther should I be now."

At that time he now and then met Matthew Maris,[2] but was too bashful to speak out freely to him, and shut up all his longings and desires within himself—he had still a long road of sorrow to go ere he could reach his goal.

In January his salary is raised and until spring his letters remain cheerful and happy; he intends to visit Holland in July and before that time seems to have spoken to Ursula of his love. Alas it turns out that she is already engaged to somebody, who boarded with them before Vincent came. He tries all his influence to make her break this engagement but does not succeed, and with this first great sorrow there comes a change in his character; when he comes home for the holidays he is thin, silent, dejected, a changed being. But he *draws* a great deal. Mother writes: "Vincent made many a nice drawing, he drew the bedroom window and the front door, all that part of the house, and also a large sketch of those houses in London upon which their window looks out; it is a delightful talent, that can be of great value to him."

[1] First line of a well known Dutch poem.
[2] Famous Dutch painter, living in London.

Accompanied by his eldest sister, who wants to find a situation, he returns to London; he takes furnished rooms in Ivy Cottage, 395 Kensington New Road, and there without any family life he grows more and more silent and depressed and also more and more religious.

His parents were glad he left the Loyers—"there were too many secrets and it was not a family like others ; but it must have been a great disappointment to him that his illusions were not realized," father writes, and mother complains, "the evenings are so long already and his work finishes early, he must be lonely, if it only does not harm him."

They feel uneasy and worried about his solitary, secluded life. Uncle Vincent also insists upon his mixing more with other people, "that is just as necessary as to learn business"; but the depressed mood continues, letters home grow more and more scarce, and mother begins to think that the London fog depresses him and that even a temporary change might do him good—"poor boy, he means so well, but I believe things are very hard for him just now."

In October 1874, Uncle Vincent effects indeed a short removal to the firm in Paris, but Vincent himself is little pleased by this, in fact he is so angry that he does not write home, to the great grief of his parents. "He is only in a bad temper," his sister says, and Theo comforts, "he is doing all right."

Towards the end of December he returns to London where he takes the same rooms and leads the same retired life. Now for the first time the word *eccentric* is applied to him. His love for drawing has ceased, but he reads much and the quotation from Renan that closes the London period clearly shows what filled his thoughts and how he aimed even then at the high ideal: "to sacrifice all personal desires, to realize great things, to obtain nobleness of mind, to surpass the vulgarity in which the existence of nearly all individuals is spent." He did not know yet which way he had to go to reach that aim.

In May 1875, he is placed permanently in Paris and assigned especially to the picture gallery, where he feels himself quite out of place; he is more at home in his "cabin," the little room at Montmartre where, morning and evening, he reads the Bible with his young friend, Harry Gladwell, than among the mondaine Parisian public.

His parents read from his letters that things are not going well, and when he comes home at Christmas and everything is talked over, father writes to Theo: "I almost think that Vincent had better leave Goupil in two or three months; there is so much that is good in him, but yet it may be necessary for him to change his position, he is certainly not happy." And they love him too well to persuade him to stay in a place where he would be unhappy; he wants to live for others, to be useful, to bring about something great, *how* he does not know as yet, but *not* in an art gallery. On his return from Holland he has the decisive interview with Mr. Boussod (the son-in-law and successor of Mr. Goupil) that ends with his dismissal on the 1st of April, and he accepts it without bringing in any excuses for himself. One of the grievances against him was that he had gone home to Holland for Christmas and New Year, the busiest time for business in Paris.

In his letters he seems to take it rather lightly, but he feels how gloomily and threateningly the clouds begin to gather around him. At the age of twenty-three years he is now thrown out of employment, without any chance of a better career; Uncle Vincent is deeply disappointed in his namesake and washes his hands of him; his parents are well-meaning, but they cannot do much for him having been obliged to touch their capital for the education of their children. (The pastor's salary was about 820 guilders a year.) Vincent has had his share, now others must have theirs. It seems that Theo who becomes so soon the helper and adviser of all, has already at that time suggested Vincent's becoming a painter, but for the moment he will not hear of it. His father speaks of a position in a museum or advises him to open a small art gallery for himself, as Uncle Vincent and Uncle Cor have done before; he would then be able to follow his own ideas about art and be no longer obliged to sell pictures which he considered bad —but his heart again draws him to England and he plans to become a teacher.

Through an advertisement, in April 1876 he gets a position in Ramsgate at Mr. Stokes', who moves his school in July to Isleworth. He received only board and lodging, but no salary, so he soon accepts another position at the somewhat richer school of Mr. Jones, a Methodist preacher, where Vincent acts finally as a kind of curate.

His letters home are gloomy. "It seems as if something were threatening me," he writes, and his parents perceive full well that teaching does not satisfy him. They suggest his studying for a French or German college certificate, but he will not hear of it. "I wish he could find some work in connection with art or nature," writes his mother, who understands what is going on within him. With the force of despair he clings to religion, in which he tries to find satisfaction for his craving for beauty, as well as for his longing to live for others. At times he seems to intoxicate himself with the sweet melodious words of the English texts and hymns, the romantic charm of the little village church, and the lovely, holy atmosphere that envelops the English service. His letters in those days bear an almost morbid sensitiveness. Often and often he speaks about a position related to the church—but when he comes home for Christmas, it is decided that he will not go back to Isleworth, because there is absolutely no prospect for the future. He remains on friendly terms with Mr. Jones, who afterwards comes to stay a few days at the Nuenen parsonage, and whom he later meets in Belgium. Once more Uncle Vincent uses his influence and procures for him a place in the bookshop of Blussé and Braam at Dordrecht. He accepts it, but without great enthusiasm. Characteristic are the words written to Theo by one of the sisters. "You think that he is something more than an ordinary human being, but I think it would be much better if he thought himself just an ordinary being." Another sister writes, "His religion makes him absolutely dull and unsociable."

To preach the Gospel still seems to him the only desirable thing, and at last an attempt is made to enable him to begin the study of Theology. The uncles in Amsterdam promised to give their aid; he can live with Uncle Jan van Gogh, Commandant of the Navy Yard, which will be a great saving of expenses: Uncle Stricker finds out the best teacher in the classical languages, the well-known Dr. Mendes da Costa, and gives him some lessons himself; in the art gallery at Uncle Cor's he can satisfy his love for pictures and prints and so everybody tries to make it easy for him, all except Uncle Vincent, who is strongly opposed to the plan and will not help to forward it—in which he proved to be right after all. Full of courage Vincent sets to work, he must first prepare himself for a State examination before he can be admitted to the University;

it will take him seven years ere he is ready; anxiously the parents ask themselves whether he will have the strength to persevere, and whether he who has never been used to regular study will be able to force himself to it at the age of twenty-four.

That period in Amsterdam, from May 1877 to 1878 is one long tale of woe. After the first half-year Vincent begins to lose ardour and courage; the writing of exercises and the study of grammar is not what he wants—he desires to comfort and cheer people by bringing them the Gospel,—and surely he does not need so much learning for that! He actually longs for *practical* work, and when at last his teacher also perceives that Vincent never will succeed, he advises him to give up the study. In the "Handelsblad" of the 30th of November 1910, Dr. Mendes da Costa writes his personal recollections of the afterwards so famous pupil, of whom he tells many characteristic particulars: his nervous, strange appearance, that yet was not without charm, his fervent intention to study well, his peculiar habit of self-discipline, self-chastisement, and finally his total unfitness for regular study. Not along that path was he to reach his goal! Openly he confesses that he is glad things have gone so far and that he can look towards his future with more courage than when he devoted himself hopelessly to Theological study, which period he afterwards called "the worst time of his life."

He will remain "humble" and now wants to become an Evangelist in Belgium; for this no certificates are required, no Latin nor Greek; only three months at the school of Evangelisation at Brussels—where lessons are free and only board and lodging are charged for—and he can get his nomination. In July he travels thither with his father, accompanied by Mr. Jones who on his way to Belgium has spent a few days with them at Etten, and together they visit the different members of the Committee of Evangelisation: the Rev. van den Brink from Rousselaere, Rev. Pietersen from Malines, and Rev. de Jong from Brussels. Vincent explained his case clearly and made a very good impression. His father writes: "His stay abroad and that last year at Amsterdam have not been quite fruitless after all, and when he takes the trouble to exert himself he shows that he has learned and observed much in the school of life," and Vincent consequently is accepted as a pupil. But the parents regard this new experiment with fresh

anxiety: " I am always so afraid that wherever Vincent may be or whatever he may do, he will spoil everything by his eccentricity, his queer ideas and views on life," his mother writes, and his father adds, " It grieves us so when we see that he literally knows no joy of life, but always walks with bent head, whilst we did all in our power to bring him to an honourable position! It seems as if he deliberately chooses the most difficult path."

In fact that was Vincent's aim—to humble himself, to forget himself, to sacrifice himself, " mourir à soi-meme," (to sacrifice every personal desire), that was the ideal he tried to reach as long as he sought his refuge in religion, and he never did a thing by halves. But to follow the paths trodden by others, to submit to the will of other people, that was not in his character, he wanted to work out his own salvation. Towards the end of August he arrives at the school at Brussels, which had only been recently opened and counted but three pupils; in the class of Mr. Bokma he certainly was the most advanced, but he does not feel at home at the school, he is " like a fish out of water " he says, and is ridiculed for his peculiarities in dress and manners. He also misses the talent of extemporizing and is therefore obliged to read his lectures from manuscript ; but the greatest objection against him is, " he is not submissive," and when the three months have elapsed he does not get his nomination. Though he writes it (in letter 126) in an off-hand way to Theo, he seems to have been greatly upset by it His father receives a letter from Brussels, probably from the school, saying that Vincent is weak and thin, does not sleep, and is in a nervous and excited state, so that the best thing will be to come and take him home.

Immediately he travels to Brussels and succeeds in arranging everything for the best. Vincent goes at his own risk to the Borinage where he boards at 30 fr. a month with M. Van der Haegen, Rue de L'Eglise 39, at Paturages near Mons. He teaches the children in the evening, visits the poor and gives lectures from the Bible, and when in January the Committee meets, he will again try to get a nomination. The intercourse with the people there pleases him very well ; in his leisure hours he draws large maps of Palestine, of which his father orders four at 10 fr. apiece, and at last, in January 1879, he gets a temporary nomination for six months at Wasmes at 50 fr. a month

for which he must give Bible lectures, teach the children and visit the sick—the work of his heart. His first letters from there are very contented and he devotes himself heart and soul to his work, especially the practical part of it; his greatest interest is in nursing the sick and wounded. Soon, however, he falls back to the old exaggerations—he tries to put into practice the doctrines of Jesus, gives away everything, his money, clothes and bed, he leaves the good boarding-house at Denis, in Wasmes, and retires to a miserable hut where every comfort is wanting. Already they had written to his parents about it and when, towards the end of February, the Rev. Rochelieu comes for inspection, the bomb explodes, for so much zeal is too much for the committee and a person who neglects himself so cannot be an example to other people. The Church Council at Wasmes have a meeting and they agree that if he does not listen to reason he will lose his position. He himself takes it rather coolly. "What shall we do now?" he writes, "Jesus was also very calm in the storm, perhaps it must grow worse before it grows better." Again his father goes to him, and succeeds in stilling the storm; he brings him back to the old boarding-house, advises him to be less exaggerated in his work, and for some time everything is all right, at least he writes that no reproofs are made. About that time a heavy mine explosion occurs and a strike breaks out, so Vincent can devote himself completely to the miners, and his mother in her naive religious faith writes, "Vincent's letters that contain so many interesting things, prove that with all his singularities he yet shows a warm interest in the poor and that surely will not remain unobserved by God." In that same time he also writes that he tries to *sketch the dresses and tools of the miners and will show them when he comes home.* In July bad tidings come again, "he does not comply with the wishes of the committee and nothing will change him. It seems that he is deaf to all remarks that are made to him," writes his mother, and when the six months of his temporary nomination are past, he is not appointed again, but they give him three months to look out for another position. He leaves Wasmes and travels on foot to Brussels to ask the Rev. Pietersen, who has moved thither from Malines, for advice. The latter paints in his leisure hours and has a studio, which probably was the reason why Vincent went to him for help. Tired and hot, exhausted and in a nervous condition he arrives there and so neglected

was his appearance that the daughter of the house who opened the door for him was frightened, called for her father and ran away. The Rev. Pietersen received him kindly; procured him good lodgings for the night, invited him to his table the next day, showed him the studio, and as Vincent had brought some of his sketches of the miners, they probably talked as much about drawing and painting as about Evangelisation.

" Vincent gives me the impression of somebody who stands in his own light," writes the Rev. Pietersen to his parents, and mother adds, " how lucky it is that still he always finds somebody who helps him on, as now the Rev. Pietersen has."

In accordance with the latter's advice, Vincent resolves to stay in the Borinage at his own expense, as he cannot be in the service of the committee, and that he will board with the Evangelist Frank, at Cuesmes. About the middle of August, at his parents' request, he visits them again at Etten. " He looks well, except for his clothes, he reads Dickens all day and speaks only when he is addressed, about his future not a single word," writes his mother. What could he say about his future? Did it ever look more hopeless than it did now? His illusion of bringing through the Gospel comfort and cheer into the miserable lives of the miners had gradually been lost in the bitter strife between doubt and religion, which he had to fight at that time, and which made him lose his former faith in God. (The Bible texts and religious reflections which became more and more rare in his last letters now stop entirely.) No other thing has taken its place yet; he draws much and reads much, among others, Dickens, Beecher Stowe, Victor Hugo, and Michelet, but it is all done without system or aim. Back in the Borinage he wanders about without work, without friends and very often without bread, for though he receives money from home and from Theo, they cannot give him more than is strictly necessary, and as it comes in at very irregular times and Vincent is a very poor financier, there are days, and even weeks when he is quite without money.

In October Theo, who has got a permanent position at Goupil's in Paris, comes to visit him on his journey thither and tries in vain to bring him to some fixed plan for the future; he is not yet ripe to take any resolution; before he becomes conscious of his real power he has still to struggle through the awful winter of 1879–'80,

that saddest, most hopeless time of his never very fortunate life. In these days he undertakes, with ten francs in his pocket, the hopeless expedition to Courrières, the dwelling place of Jules Breton, whose pictures and poems he so much admires, and with whom he secretly hopes to come in contact in some way or other. But the only thing that becomes visible to him is the inhospitable exterior of Breton's newly built studio and he lacks the courage to introduce himself. Disappointed in his hope, he has to undertake the long journey home; his money is all spent, generally he sleeps in the open air or in a hay loft. Sometimes he exchanges a drawing for a piece of bread, and he undergoes so much fatigue and want that his health always suffered from the consequences. In spring he comes once more to the vicarage of Etten and speaks again about going to London. "If he really wants it, I shall enable him to go," writes his father, but finally he returns again to the Borinage and lives that summer of 1880 at the house of the miner, Charles Decrucq at Cuesmes. There he writes in July the wonderfully touching letter (133) that tells of what is going on in his innermost self—"My only anxiety is what can I do . . . could I not be of use, and good for something?" It is the old wish, the old longing to serve and comfort humanity, which made him write afterwards, when he had found his calling, "And in a picture I wish to say something that would console as music does." Now in the days of deepest discouragement and darkness at last the light begins to dawn. Not in books shall he find satisfaction, not in literature find his work, as his letters sometimes suggested, he turns back to his old love, "I said to myself, I'll take up my pencil again, I will take up drawing, and from that moment everything has changed for me." It sounds like a cry of deliverance, and once more, "do not fear for me, if I can continue my work I will succeed." At last he has found his work and herewith the mental equilibrium is restored; he no longer doubts of himself and however difficult or heavy his life may become, the inward serenity, the conviction of his own calling never more deserts him.

The little room in the house of the miner Decrucq, which he has to share with the children, is his first studio. There he begins his painter's career with the first original drawing of miners who go to work in the early morning. There he copies with restless activity the large drawings after Millet, and when the room is

getting too narrow for him, he takes his work out into the garden.

When the cold autumn weather prevents his doing this, and as his surroundings at Cuesmes are getting too narrow for him, he moves in October to Brussels where he settles in a small hotel on the Bd. du Midi 72. He is longing to see pictures again, but above all he hopes to become acquainted with other artists. Deep in his heart there was such a great longing for sympathy, for kindness and friendship, and though his difficult character generally prevented him from finding this and left him isolated in life, yet he always kept on longing for somebody with whom he could live and work.

Theo, who meanwhile had acquired a good position in Paris, could now assist him in word and deed. He brought Vincent into relation with the young Dutch painter van Rappard, who had worked some time in Paris and now studied at the academy at Brussels. At first the acquaintance did not progress, for the outward difference between the rich young nobleman and the neglected wanderer from the Borinage was too great to ripen the acquaintance at once into friendship; yet the artistic taste and opinions of both were too similar for them not to find each other; a friendship arose—perhaps the only one that Vincent ever had in Holland—it lasted for five years and then was broken through a misunderstanding, which van Rappard always regretted, though he acknowleged that intercourse with Vincent was very difficult.

"I remember as if it happened yesterday the moment of our first meeting at Brussels when he came into my room at nine o'clock in the morning, how at first we did not get on very well together, but so much the better after we had worked together a few times," writes van Rappard to Vincent's mother after the latter's death. And again, "whoever has witnessed this wrestling, struggling and sorrowful existence could not but feel sympathy for the man who demanded so much of himself, that it ruined body and mind. He belonged to the race that produces the great artists.

"Though Vincent and I had been separated the last years by a misunderstanding which I have often regretted—I have never ceased to remember him and the time we spent together with great sympathy.

"Whenever in the future I shall remember that time, and it is

always a delight for me to recall the past, the characteristic figure of Vincent will appear to me in such a melancholy but clear light, the struggling and wrestling, fanatic, gloomy Vincent, who used to flare up so often and was so irritable, but who still deserved friendship and admiration for his noble mind and highly artistic qualities."

Vincent's own opinion of van Rappard is clearly shown in his letters. A second acquaintance that Vincent made through Theo, with the painter Roelofs, was of less-during importance. Roelof's advice to enter the Academy was not followed by Vincent, perhaps they did not admit him because he was not far enough advanced, but probably he had more than enough of academical institutions and theories, and in painting as well as in theology he preferred to go his own way; that is the reason he did not come into contact with other Dutch painters who were at that same. time at the Academy at Brussels, for instance, Haverman.

He studied anatomy by himself, drew diligently from the living model, and from a letter to his father it seems that he took lessons in perspective from a poor painter at 1.50 fr. a lesson of two hours: it has not been possible to fix the name of the painter, it may have been Madiol.

At the end of the winter when van Rappard goes away, in whose studio he has often worked because his own little bedroom was too small, he longs for other surroundings, especially for the country; the expenses in Brussels are also somewhat heavy, and he thinks it will be cheapest to go to his parents at Etten where he has board and lodging free and can use all the money he receives, for his work.

He stays there for eight months, and this summer of 1881 is again a happy time for him. First, van Rappard comes to stay with him and he too always remembers with pleasure his stay at the vicarage, "And my visit at Etten! I see you still sitting at the window when I came in," he writes to Vincent's mother in the letter quoted above, "I still enjoy that beautiful walk we all took together that first evening, through the fields and along the small path! And our excursions to Seppen, Passievaart, Liesbosch, I often look through my sketch books for them."

In the beginning of August Theo comes over from Paris; shortly after Vincent makes an excursion to the Hague to consult about his work with Mauve, who firmly encourages him, so that

he continues with great animation, and finally in those days he meets for the second time a woman who has great influence on his life. Among the guests who spent that summer at the vicarage at Etten was a cousin from Amsterdam—a young widow with her little four-year-old son. Quite absorbed in her grief over the loss of her husband, whom she had loved so tenderly, she was unconscious of the impression which her beauty and touching sorrow made on the cousin, who was a few years her junior. "He was so kind to my little boy," she said when she afterwards remembered that time. Vincent who had great love for children, tried to win the heart of the mother by great devotion to the child. They walked and talked much together, and he has also drawn a portrait of her (which seems to have been lost), but the thought of a more intimate relation did not occur to her, and when Vincent spoke to her at last about his love, a very decided *no* was the immediate reply. She went back to Amsterdam and never saw him again. But Vincent could not abide by her decision, and with his innate tenacity he keeps on persevering and hoping for a change in her feelings for him; when his letters are not answered, he accuses both his and her parents of opposing the match, and only a visit to Amsterdam, where she refuses to see him, convinces him of the utter hopelessness of his love.

"He fancied that he loved me," she said afterwards, but for him it was sad earnest, and her refusal becomes a turning point in his life. If she had returned his love it would perhaps have been a spur to him to acquire a social position, he would have had to provide for her and her child; as it is he loses all worldly ambition and in the future lives only for his work, without taking one step to make himself independent. He cannot bear to stay in Etten any longer, he has become irritable and nervous, his relations to his parents become strained, and after a violent altercation with his father, in December he leaves suddenly for the Hague.

The two years he spends there are, for his work, a very important period of which his letters give a perfect description. His low spirits rise at first, by the change of surroundings and the intercourse with Mauve, but the feeling of having been slighted and wronged does not leave him and he feels himself utterly abandoned. When he meets in January a poor neglected woman approaching her confinement, he takes her under his protection, partly from pity

but also to fill the great void in his life. "I hope there is no harm in his so-called model. Bad connections often arise from a feeling of loneliness, of dissatisfaction," writes his father to Theo, who is always the confidant of both parties and has to listen to all the complaints and worries; father is not far wrong. Vincent could not be alone, he wanted to live for somebody, he wanted a wife and children, and as the woman he loved had rejected him, he took the first unhappy woman who crossed his path, with children that were not his own. At first he feigns to be happy and tries to convince Theo in every letter how wisely and well he has acted, and the touching care and tenderness with which he surrounds the woman when she leaves the hospital after her confinement, strike us painfully when we think on whom that treasure of love was lavished. He prides himself now on having a family of his own, but when their living together has become a fact and he is continually associated with a coarse, uneducated woman, marked by smallpox, who speaks with a low accent and has a spiteful character, who is addicted to liquor and smokes cigars, whose past life has not been irreproachable, and who draws him into all kinds of intrigues with her family, he soon writes no more about his home life; even the posing, by which she won him (she sat for the beautiful drawing, "Sorrow"), and of which he had expected so much, soon ceases altogether. This unfortunate adventure deprives him of the sympathy of all in the Hague who took an interest in him. Neither Mauve nor Tersteeg could approve of his taking upon himself the cares of a family, and such a family! while he was financially dependent on his younger brother. Acquaintances and relatives are shocked to see him walk about with such a slovenly woman; nobody cares to associate with him any longer and his home life is such that nobody comes to visit him. The solitude around him becomes greater and greater and as usual it is only Theo who understands and continues to help him.

When the latter comes to visit Vincent for the second time in the Hague, in the summer of 1883, and witnesses the situation—finds the household neglected, everything in bad condition and Vincent deeply in debt—he too advises to let the woman go her own way as she is not fit for a regulated life. She herself had already felt that things could not continue like that, because Vincent wants too much money for his painting to leave enough for the support

of her and the children, and she was already planning with her mother to earn money in another way. Vincent himself feels that Theo is right, and in his heart he longs for a change of surroundings, and liberty to go where his work calls him, but it costs him a bitter struggle to give up what he had taken upon himself, and to leave the poor woman to her fate. Till the last he defends her, and excuses her for her faults with the sublime words, "she has never seen what is good, so how can she be good?"

In those days of inward strife he allows Theo to read deeper than ever into his heart. These last letters from the Hague (letters 313 to 322) give the key to many things that were incomprehensible until now. For the first time he speaks openly about what has happened at the time of his dismissal from Goupil, for the first time he explains his strange indifference to show his own work or to try to make it productive, when he writes, "it is so painful for me to speak to people. I am not afraid to do so, but I know I make a disagreeable impression; I am so much afraid that my efforts to introduce myself will do me more harm than good," and how naively he adds, "human brains cannot bear everything as is shown by van Rappard, who had brain fever and now has gone to Germany to recover." As if he wanted to say: "do not let me make efforts to know strange people, as the same thing might happen to me." Once more he touches the old love story of Etten, "a single word made me feel that nothing is changed in me about it, that it is and remains a wound, which I carry with me, but it lies deep and will never heal, it will remain in after years just what it was the first day." And he expresses openly how different his life would have been without this disappointment in his love.

When at last he starts alone in September for Drenthe, he has made all possible provisions for the woman and the children, and there is a sorrowful parting, especially from the little boy to whom he had become attached as if it were his own child.

The trip to Drenthe proves a failure instead of doing him good. But some of his most beautiful letters date from those days. The season was too far advanced, the country too inhospitable, and what Vincent so ardently desired—to come into contact with some artists, for instance, Lieberman—was not realized.

Bitter loneliness and want of money put a too heavy strain on

his nerves. He is afraid of falling ill, and in December 1883 hastens back to the parental vicarage, the only place where he can find a safe shelter.

His father had meanwhile left Etten and been nominated to Nuenen, a village in the neighbourhood of Eindhoven, and the new place and surroundings pleased Vincent so well that instead of paying a short visit, as first was his intention, he stays there for two years.

To paint the Brabant landscape and the Brabant types is

THE VICARAGE AT NUENEN

now his aim, and to accomplish that aim he overlooks all other difficulties.

To live together with his parents was for him as well as for them a very difficult thing. In a small village vicarage, where nothing can happen without the whole village knowing it, a painter is obviously an anomaly ; how much more a painter like Vincent, who had so completely broken with all formalities, conventionalities and with all religion, and who was the last person in the world to conform himself to other people. On both sides there must have been great love and great patience to put up with it so long. When his letters from Drenthe to his parents

became more and more melancholy, his father anxiously had written to Theo, "it seems to me that Vincent is again in a wrong mood. He seems to be in a melancholy state of mind; but how can it be otherwise? Whenever he looks back into the past and recalls to his memory how he has broken with all former relations, it must be very painful to him. If he had only the courage to think of the possibility that the cause of much which has resulted from his eccentricity lies in himself. I don't think he ever feels

THE VICARAGE AT NUENEN, WITH VINCENT'S STUDIO ON THE RIGHT

any self-reproach, only soreness against others, especially against the gentlemen at the Hague. We must be very careful with him for he seems to be in a fit of contrariness."

And they *are* so careful. When he comes back to them of his own will, they receive him with so much love and try all in their power to make him comfortable; they are proud too of the progress in his work, of which it must be said they had no great expectations at first. "Do you not like the pen drawings of the tower that Vincent sent you? It seems to come to him so easily," writes

his father in the first days of December to Theo, and then on the twentieth of December, "You will be longing to know how things are getting on with Vincent. At first it seemed hopeless, but by and by things have arranged themselves, especially since we approved of his staying here for some time to make studies. He wanted the inner room fitted up for him; we did not think it a very fit abode for him, but we had a nice stove put there; as the room had a stone floor we had it covered with boards, and made it as comfortable as possible: we put a bed in it on a wooden stand, that it might not be too damp. Now we will make the room nicely warm and dry, so that it may turn out better than we expected. I proposed to have a large window made in it but he did not want that. In short, with real courage we undertake this new experiment and we intend to leave him perfectly free in his peculiarities of dress, etc. The people here have seen him anyhow, and though it is a pity he is so reserved in manner, we cannot change the fact of his being eccentric. . . ." "He seems to occupy himself a great deal with your plans for the future, but you will be wise enough not to let yourself be influenced to do things that are not practical, for alas that certainly is his foible. One thing is certain, he works hard and finds here lots of subjects, he has made already several drawings, which we like very much." Such is the feeling from their side ; but Vincent is not satisfied with all that kindness and wants a deeper understanding of his innermost self than his parents can give, however much they try. When about the middle of January '84 his mother meets with an accident and is brought home from Helmond with a broken leg, the relations become less strained. Vincent who has become an expert nurse in the Borinage, helps to nurse his mother with the greatest devotion, and in every letter of that time they praise him for his faithful help. "Vincent is untiring, and the rest of his time he devotes to his painting and drawing with the greatest zeal." "The doctor praised Vincent for his ability and care." "Vincent proves an ideal nurse and at the same time he works with the greatest ambition." "I fervently hope that his work may find success for it is edifying to see how much he works," is told in the letters of February.

Vincent's own letters at that time are gloomy and full of complaints and unjust reproaches to Theo that he never sells anything for him and does not even try to, ending at last with the bitter cry:

" A wife you cannot give me, a child you cannot give me, work you cannot give me—money yes, but what is the use of it when I must miss all the rest! " And Theo, who always understands him, never gives a sharp or angry answer to those reproaches : a light sarcasm is the only reply he sometimes gives to such outbursts. In May Vincent's spirits rise somewhat on his moving into a new, larger studio, two rooms in the house of the sexton of the Catholic church. Shortly after, van Rappard comes to spend some time with him again, and besides, Vincent had during his mother's illness come more in contact with neighbours and friends of the village, who daily came to visit the patient, so that he writes in those days, " I have had a much pleasanter time with the people here than at first, which is worth a great deal to me, for one must have some distraction now and then, and when one feels too lonely the work suffers from it." But with a prophetic glance he continues, " One must keep in mind however that these things do not always last." Indeed, difficult times were approaching for him again. With one of his mother's visitors, the youngest of three sisters who lived next door to the vicarage, he had soon got into a more intimate relation; she was much older than he and neither beautiful nor gifted, but she had an active mind and a kind heart. She often visited the poor with Vincent; they walked much together, and on her part at least the friendship soon changed into love. As to Vincent, though his letters do not give the impression of any passionate feeling for her (the fact is he writes very little about it), yet he seems to have been inclined to marry her, but the family vehemently protested against the plan, and violent scenes took place between the sisters, which were not conducive to keep Vincent in a pleasant mood.

" Vincent works hard but he is not very sociable," writes his mother in July, and it will get worse still, for the young woman, violently excited by the scenes with her sisters, tries to commit suicide, which fails, but shocks her health so much that she had to be nursed at a doctor's in Utrecht. She quite recovered and after half a year she came back to Nuenen, but their relations were broken for ever and the whole affair left Vincent in a gloomy, bitter mood.

For his parents the consequences were also painful, because the neighbours avoided the vicarage from that time, not wishing to

meet Vincent, " which is a great privation for me, but it is not your mother's way to complain," the latter writes in October of that year. It is in those days that van Rappard once more comes to stay with them. " He is not a talkative person, but a hard worker," writes mother, and van Rappard himself writes in 1890, in the letter to her, quoted above, " how often do I think of the studies of the weavers which he made in Nuenen, with what intensity of feeling did he depict their lives, what deep melancholy pervaded them, however clumsy the execution of his work may have been then. And what beautiful studies he made of the old church tower in the churchyard. I always remember a moonlight effect of it, which particularly struck me at that time. When I think of those studies in those two rooms near the church, it recalls to my mind so many memories, and reminds me of the whole surroundings, the cheerful hospitable vicarage with its beautiful garden, the family Begemann, our visits to the weavers and peasants, how I did enjoy it all."

After van Rappard's visit Vincent has no other distraction than a few acquaintances in Eindhoven, with whom he has come into contact through the house painter, who furnishes his colours. They are a former goldsmith, Hermans, a tanner, Kersemakers, and also a telegraphist whose name is not mentioned, all of whom Vincent initiates into the art of painting. Mr. Kersemakers has recorded his reminiscences of that time in the weekly " De Amsterdammer " of the 14th and 21st of April 1912, and gives among others the following description of Vincent's studio, which according to him looked quite " Bohemian."

" It was quite astonishing to see how crowded the place was with pictures, with drawings in water-colour and chalk; heads of men and women whose negro-like turned up noses, projecting jaw-bones and large ears were strongly accentuated, the fists calous and furrowed; weavers and weavers' looms, women driving the shuttle, peasants planting potatoes, women busy weaving, innumerable still-lives, at least ten studies in oil of the old church tower at Nuenen, of which he was so fond, and which he had painted in all seasons of the year and in all weathers (afterwards this old tower was demolished by the Nuenen Vandals, as he called them).

Heaps of ashes around the stove, which never had seen brush or polish, a few frayed out rush-bottomed chairs, and a cupboard with

at least thirty different birds' nests, all kinds of moss and plants brought from the heath, some stuffed birds, shuttles, spinning-wheel, bed-warmer, all sorts of farmers' tools, old caps and hats, dirty women's bonnets, wooden shoes, etc." He also tells about their trip to Amsterdam (in the autumn of 1885) to see the "Ryks-museum," how Vincent in his rough ulster and his inseparable fur cap was calmly sitting painting a few small views of the town in the waiting room of the station; how they saw the Rembrandts in the museum, how Vincent could not tear himself away from the "Jewish Bride" and said at last, "Do you know that I would give ten years of my life if I could sit here before this picture a fortnight, with nothing but a crust of dry bread for food."

Dry bread was nothing unusual to him; according to Kersemakers, Vincent never ate it otherwise, in order not to indulge himself too much. His impression of Vincent's work is given as follows: "At my first visit in Nuenen I could not understand it at all, it was so totally different from what I expected, it was so strong, so coarse and unfinished that I could not possibly admire it or see anything in it.

At my second visit the impression was already much better, though I thought in my ignorance that he could not draw, or totally neglected the drawing of the figures, and I took the liberty of telling him straight out. I did not make him angry, he only laughed and said: 'You will think differently about it later on.'"

Meanwhile the winter days passed on gloomily enough at the vicarage. "For Vincent I should wish that the winter were over, he cannot work out of doors and the long evenings are not profitable for his work. We often think that it would be better for him to be among people of his own profession, but we cannot dictate to him," writes his father in December, and mother complains, "how is it possible to behave so unkindly. If he has wishes for the future, let him exert himself, he is still young enough; it is almost impossible to bear it. I think he wants a change, perhaps he might find something that would give him inspiration, here it is always the same thing and he never speaks to anyone." But still she finds one luminous point to mention: "we saw that Vincent received a book from you, he seems to read it with much pleasure. I heard him say 'that is a fine book,' so you have given him great pleasure. I am glad that we regularly get books from the reading club;

the illustrations in the magazines interest him most, and then there is the Nouvelle Revue, etc., every week something new is a great pleasure to him." Incessantly Vincent continues his work in the gloomy cottages of peasants and weavers. "I never began a year of a more gloomy aspect, in a more gloomy mood," he writes on New Year's Day '85. "He seems to become more and more estranged from us," complains his father, whose letters became more and more melancholy, as if he is not equal to the difficulties of living together with his gifted, unmanageable son, and feels himself helpless against his unbridled violence. "This morning I talked things over with Vincent; he was in a kind mood and said there was no particular reason for his being depressed," says the latter, "may he meet with success anyhow," are the last words he writes about Vincent in a letter of the 25th of March. Two days later, coming home from a long walk across the heath, he fell down on the threshold of his home and was carried lifeless into the house. Hard times followed in the vicarage; mother could remain there another year, but for Vincent it brought immediate changes. In consequence of several disagreeable discussions with the other members of the family, he resolved to live no longer at the vicarage, but took up his abode in the studio, where he stayed from May to November. Henceforth there is not a single thing to distract him from his aim—to paint the peasant life. He spends those months in the cottages of the weavers or with the peasants in the field. "It is a fine thing to be right in the snow in the winter, right in the yellow leaves in autumn, in summer right in the ripe corn, in spring right in the grass, always with the peasant girls and reapers, in summer under the open skies, in winter near the open fireplace, and to know that it has always been so and will always be" (letter 425). He is now in harmony with himself and his surroundings, and when he sends Theo his first great picture, "The Potato-Eaters," he can say in good reason that it is "from the heart of peasant life."

An uninterrupted series of studies follow each other; the cottages of the old peasants and their witch-like wives, the old church tower of the cemetery, the autumn landscapes and the birds' nests, a number of still-lives and the strong drawings of the Brabant peasants. In Nuenen he also writes the beautiful passages about colour, in reference to Delacroix's laws of colours. It seems

strange to hear him, who was called afterwards one of the first Impressionists, even Neo-impressionists, declare, " there is a school I think of impressionists, but I do not know much about it " (letter 402), and in his usual spirit of contradiction he afterwards adds, " from what you have told me about impressionism I have learned that it is different from what I thought it was, but as to me I find Israëls for instance so enormous that I am little curious about or desirous of anything different or new. I think I shall change a great deal in touch and colour but I expect to become rather more dark than lighter." As soon as he came to France he thought differently of it.

During the last days of his stay in Nuenen difficulties arise between him and the Catholic priest, who has long since looked askance at the studio next to his church, and now forbids his parishioners to pose for Vincent. The latter was already thinking about a change. He gives notice of leaving his studio the first of May, but starts for Antwerp, towards the end of November, leaving all his Brabant work behind. When in May his mother also leaves Nuenen, everything belonging to Vincent is packed in cases, left in care of a carpenter in Breda and—forgotten! After several years the carpenter finally sold everything to a junk dealer.

What Theo's opinion about his brother was at that time is shown in the letter to his sister of the 13th of October '85, in which he writes: " Vincent is one of those who has gone through all the experiences of life and has retired from the world, now we must wait and see if he has genius. I think he has. . . . If he succeeds in his work he will be a great man. As to the worldly success, it will perhaps be with him as with Heyerdahl[1]: appreciated by some but not understood by the public at large. Those however who care whether there is really something in the artist, or if it is only outward shine, will respect him, and in my opinion that will be sufficient revenge for the animosity shown him by so many others."

In Antwerp Vincent rents for 25 fr. a month a little room over a small paint-dealer's shop in the " Rue des Images " 194. It is but a very small room but he makes it cosy with Japanese prints on the wall, and when he has rented a stove and a lamp, he feels himself safe and writes with profound satisfaction, " no fear of my being

[1] Norwegian painter, then in Paris.

bored I can assure you." On the contrary he spends the three months of his stay in one feverish intoxication of work. The town life which he has missed so long fascinates him ; he has not eyes enough to see, nor hands enough to paint: to make portraits of all the interesting types he meets is his delight, and in order to pay the models he sacrifices everything he has. As for food he does not bother. "If I receive money my first hunger is not for food, though I have fasted ever so long, but the desire for painting is ever so much stronger, and I start at once hunting for models till there is nothing left," he writes.

When he sees in January that he cannot go on like that, the expenses being too heavy, he becomes a pupil of the Academy, where the teaching is free and where he finds models every day. Hageman and de Baseleer were there among his fellow pupils and from Holland there was Briët. In the evening he worked again in the drawing class and after that, often till late at night, at a club where they also draw from life. His health cannot stand such a strain and in the beginning of February he writes that he is literally worn out and exhausted, according to the doctor it is complete prostration. He seems not to think about giving up his work, however, though he begins to make projects for a change, for the course at the Academy is almost finished and he has already had many disagreements with his teachers, for he is much too independent and self-willed to follow their guidance. Something must be done. Theo thinks it better for Vincent to go back to Brabant, but he himself wants to go to Paris. Then Theo proposes to wait at least till June, when he shall have rented a larger apartment, but with his usual impetuosity Vincent cannot wait so long, and one morning in the end of February, Theo receives in his office at the Boulevard a little note written in chalk, that Vincent had arrived and awaits him in the Salon Carré of the Louvre. Probably he left all his work in Antwerp, perhaps his landlord the paint-dealer kept it for the unpaid rent of the room. Certain it is that none of the studies about which he writes, the view of the Park, of the Cathedral, Het Steen, etc., ever has been found again.

The meeting in the Louvre took place, and since then Vincent lived with Theo in the latter's apartment in the Rue de Laval. As there was no room for a studio he worked during the first month at Cormon's studio, which did not satisfy him at all, but

when they moved in June to the Rue Lepic 54, on Montmarte, he had there a studio of his own and never went back to Cormon.

The new apartment on the third floor had three rather large rooms, a cabinet and a kitchen. The living room was comfortable and cosy with Theo's beautiful old cabinet, a sofa and a big stove, for both the brothers were very sensitive to the cold. Next to that was Theo's bedroom. Vincent slept in the cabinet and behind that was the studio, an ordinary sized room with one not very large window. Here he first painted his nearest surroundings—the view from the studio window, the Moulin de la Galette viewed from every side, the window of Madame Bataille's small restaurant where he took his meals, little landscapes on Montmarte which was at that time still quite countrified, all painted in a soft tender tone like that of Mauve. Afterwards he painted flowers and still-life and tried to renew his palette under the influence of the French "plein air" painters such as Monet, Sisley, Pisarro, etc., for whom Theo had long since opened the way to the public. The change of surroundings and the easier and more comfortable life, without any material cares, at first greatly improved Vincent's health. In the summer of '86 Theo writes to his mother, "we like the new apartment very much; you would not recognize Vincent, he is so much changed, and it strikes other people more than it does me. He has undergone an important operation in his mouth, for he had lost almost all his teeth through the bad condition of his stomach. The doctor says that he has now quite recovered his health; he makes great progress in his work and has begun to have some success. He is in much better spirits than before and many people here like him . . . he has friends who send him every week a lot of beautiful flowers which he uses for still-life, he paints chiefly flowers, especially to make the colours of his next pictures brighter and clearer. If we can continue to live together like this, I think the most difficult period is past, and he will find his way." To continue living together, that was the great difficulty, and of all that Theo did for his brother, there is perhaps nothing that proved greater sacrifice than his having endured living with him for two years. For when the first excitement of all the new attractions in Paris had passed, Vincent soon fell back to his old irritability; perhaps the city life did not agree with him either and overstrained his nerves. Whatever might be the cause, his temper

during that winter was worse than ever, and made life very hard for Theo, whose own health was not of the best at that time. Circumstances put too heavy a strain on his strength. His own work was very strenuous and exhausting, he had made the gallery on the Boulevard Montemarte a centre of the Impressionists, there were Monet, Sisley, Pisarro and Raffaelli, Degas who exhibited nowhere else, Seurat, etc. But to introduce that work to the public, which filled the small entresol every afternoon from five until seven, what discussions, what endless debates, had to be held, and on the other hand how he had to defend the rights of the young painters against "ces messieurs," as Vincent always called the heads of the firm. When he came home tired out in the evening he found no rest, but the impetuous, violent Vincent began to expound his own theories about art and art-dealing, which always came to the point that Theo ought to leave Goupil and open a gallery for himself. And this lasted till far into the night, ay sometimes he sat down on a chair before Theo's bed to spin out his last arguments. "Do you feel how hard it sometimes is to have no other conversation than with gentlemen who speak about business, with artists whose life generally is difficult enough, but never to come in contact with women and children of your own sphere? You can have no idea of the loneliness in a big city," writes Theo once to his youngest sister and to her he sometimes opens his heart about Vincent: "my home life is almost unbearable, no one wants to come and see me any more, because it always ends in quarrels, and besides he is so untidy that the room looks far from attractive. I wish he would go and live by himself, he speaks sometimes about it, but if I were to tell him to go away, it would be just a reason for him to stay; as it seems I do him no good. I only ask him one thing, to do me no harm and by his stay-he does so, for I can hardly bear it." "It seems as if he were two persons in one, one marvellously gifted, tender and refined, the other egoistic and hard-hearted. They present themselves in turns, so that one hears him talk first in one way, then in the other, and always with arguments on both sides. It is a pity that he is his own enemy, for he makes life hard not only for others but also for himself." But when his sister advises him to "leave Vincent for God's sake," to himself, Theo answers, "it is such a peculiar case. If he only had another profession I would long ago have

done what you advise me, and I have often asked myself if I have not been wrong in helping him continually. I have often been on the point of leaving him to his own devices. After receiving your letter I have thought it over again, but I think in this case I must continue in the same way. He is certainly an artist and if what he makes now is not always beautiful, it will certainly be of use to him afterwards, and then his work will perhaps be sublime, and it would be a shame to keep him from his regular study. However unpractical he may be, if he succeeds in his work there will certainly come a day when he will begin to sell his pictures. . . .

I am firmly resolved to continue in the same way as till now, but I do hope that he will change his lodgings in some way or other."

However, that separation did not take place. The old love and friendship which bound them together since childhood, did not fail them even now. Theo managed to restrain himself, and in the spring he wrote, " as I feel much stronger than last winter I hope to be able to bring a change for the better in our relations; there will be no other change for the present and I am glad of it. We are already most of us so far from home that it would be no use to bring about still more separation." And full of courage he continues to help Vincent bear the burden of his life.

With spring there came in all respects a better time. Vincent could again work in the open air and painted much at Asnières where he painted the beautiful triptych of " l'Isle de la grande Jatte," the borders of the Seine with their gay, bright restaurants, the little boats on the river, the parks and gardens, all sparkling with light and colour. At that time he saw much of Emile Bernard, a young painter fifteen years younger than himself, whom he had met at Cormon's and who had a little wooden studio in his parents' garden at Asnières, where they sometimes worked together and where Vincent began a portrait of Bernard. But one day he fell into a violent quarrel with old Mr. Bernard about the latter's projects for his son. Vincent could bear no contradiction, he ran away in a passion with the still wet portrait under his arm, and he never set foot again in the house of the Bernards. But the friendship with the young Bernard remained, and in his " Letters of Vincent van Gogh," (published at Vollard's in Paris), are the most beautiful pages written about Vincent.

In the winter of '87–'88, Vincent again paints portraits —the famous self-portrait before the easel, and many other self-portraits, as well as father Tanguy, the old merchant of colours in the Rue Clausel, in whose show-window his customers were allowed to exhibit their pictures by turns, and who unjustly sometimes has been described as a Mæcenas, the qualities for which were absolutely wanting in the poor old man, and even if he had possessed them, his shrewd wife would not have allowed him to use them. He sent, and justly too, very proper bills for the colours he furnished, and did not understand very much about the pictures that were exposed in his window.

From that time dates also the famous picture, " Interior with Lady by a Cradle," and when Theo who has bought that winter a few pictures from young artists, to help them, and wants to do the same for Vincent, the latter paints for him the beautiful " Still Life in Yellow," sparkling and radiant as from an inward glow, and with red letters he graves the dedication " To my brother Theo."

Toward the end of the winter he is tired of Paris, city life is too much for him, the climate too grey and chilly, in February '88 he travels toward the south. " After all these years of care and misfortune his health has not grown stronger and he decidedly wanted to be in a milder climate," Theo writes. " He has first gone to Arles to look around him, and then will probably go to Marseilles.

" Before he went away I went a few times with him to hear a Wagner concert; we both enjoyed it very much. It still seems strange that he is gone. He was so much to me the last time." And Bernard tells how Vincent was busy that last day in Paris arranging the studio, " So that my brother will think me still here."

At Arles, Vincent reaches the summit of his art. After the oppressiveness of Parisian life he, with his innate love of nature, revives in sunny Provence. There follows a happy time of undisturbed and immense productivity. Without paying much attention to the town of Arles itself with its famous remains of Roman architecture, he paints the landscape, the glorious wealth of blossoms in Spring in a series of orchards in bloom, the cornfields under the burning sun at harvest time, the almost intoxicating richness of colours of the autumn, the glorious beauty of the gardens and

parks, "The Poet's Garden," where he sees as in a vision the ghosts of Dante and Petrarcha roaming about. He paints "The Sower," "The Sunflowers," "The Starlit Night," the sea at St. Marie: his creative impulse and power are inexhaustible. "I have a terrible lucidity at moments, when nature is so glorious in those days I am hardly conscious of myself and the picture comes to me like in a dream," and rapturously he exclaims, "Life is after all enchanting."

His letters henceforth, written in French, give a complete image of what passes within him. Sometimes when he has written in the morning, he sits down again in the evening to tell his brother how splendid the day has been. "I never had such a chance, nature is extraordinarily beautiful here," and a day later, "I know that I wrote to you yesterday but the day has been again so glorious. My only regret is that you cannot see what I see here."

Completely absorbed in his work as he is, he does not feel the burden of the great loneliness that surrounds him in Arles, for except a short acquaintance with MacKnight, Bock and the Zouave lieutenant Milliet, he has no friends whatever. But when he has rented a little house of his own on the Place Lamartine, and arranges it after his own taste, decorates it with his pictures, makes it a "maison d'artiste," then he feels the old longing again, which he has already uttered at the beginning of his painting career in 1880, to associate himself with another artist, to live together and to work together. Just then he receives a letter from Paul Gauguin from Bretagne, who is in the greatest pecuniary embarrassment, and who tries in this roundabout way to ask Theo to try to sell some of his pictures for him: "I wanted to write to your brother but I am afraid to bother him, he being so busy from morning until night. The little I have sold is just enough to pay some urgent debts and in a month I shall have absolutely nothing left. Zero is a negative force . . . I do not want to importune your brother, but a little word from you on this head would set my mind at ease or at least help me to have patience. My God, how terrible are these money questions for an artist."

At once Vincent grasps at the idea of helping Gauguin. He must come to Arles and they will live and work together. Theo will pay the expenses and Gauguin will give him pictures in exchange. Again and again he insists on this plan with his innate perseverance and stubbornness, though Gauguin at first did not seem at all

inclined to it. They had made each other's acquaintance in Paris, but it had been no more than a superficial acquaintance, and they were too different in talent and character ever to harmonize in the daily intercourse.

Gauguin, born in Paris in 1848, was the son of a Breton father, a journalist in Paris, and a Creole mother. His youth was full of adventures, he had gone to sea as cabin boy, had worked in a banker's office and had only painted in his leisure hours. Then after he had married and had a family, he devoted himself wholly to his art. His wife and children returned to her native city Copenhagen, as he was not able to provide for them, and he himself made a journey to Martinique where he painted, among others, his famous picture "The negresses." He was now in Pont Aven in Brittany, without any source of income, so that the great need of money made him accept Vincent's proposition and come to Arles. The whole undertaking was a sad failure and had for Vincent a fatal end.

Notwithstanding the months of superhuman exertion which lay behind him, he strained every nerve in a last manifestation of power before the arrival of Gauguin. "I am conceited enough to want to make a certain impression on Gauguin by my painting. I have finished as far as possible the things I had undertaken, pushed by the great desire to show him something new, and not to undergo his influence before I have shown him indisputably my own originality," writes Vincent in letter 556. When we know that to this last work belongs one of Vincent's most famous pictures, "la chambre à coucher," and the series, "The Poet's Garden," it makes us feel rather sceptical about Gauguin's later assertion that before his arrival Vincent had only been bungling a little, and that he only made progress after Gauguin's lessons. We know then what to think of Gauguin's whole description of the episode at Arles, which is such a mixture of truth and fiction.[1]

The fact is that Vincent was completely exhausted and overstrained, and was no match for the iron Gauguin with his strong nerves and cool arguing. It became a silent struggle between them, and the endless discussions held while smoking in the little yellow house were not fit to calm Vincent. "Your brother is indeed a little agitated and I hope to calm him by and by," Gauguin writes to Theo, shortly after his arrival at Arles. And to Bernard he

[1] "Paul Gauguin," by Chas. Morice, "Mercure de France," 1903.

tells more intimately how little sympathy there really is between Vincent and himself. " Vincent and I generally agree very little especially about painting. He admires Daudet, Daubigny, Ziem, and the great Rousseau, all people whom I cannot bear. And on the contrary he detests Ingres, Raphaël, Degas, all people whom I admire. I answer, ' Brigadier, you are right,' in order to have peace. He loves my pictures very much, but when I make them he always finds I am wrong in this or that. He is romantic and I rather inclined to the primitive state."[1] And in later years when Gauguin again remembers this period he writes, " between two beings, he and I, he like a Vulcan, and I boiling too, a kind of struggle was preparing itself. . . ." [2] The situation in consequence becomes more and more strained. In the latter half of December Theo receives from Gauguin the following letter: " Dear Mr. van Gogh,—I would be greatly obliged to you for sending me a part of the money for the pictures sold. After all I must go back to Paris, Vincent and I simply cannot live together in peace, in consequence of incompatibility of temper, and he as well as I, we need quiet for our work. He is a man of remarkable intelligence, whom I highly respect and leave with regret, but I repeat it is necessary. I appreciate all the delicacy in your conduct towards me and I beg you to excuse my decision." Vincent also writes, in letter 565, that Gauguin seems to be tired of Arles, of the yellow house, and of himself. But the quarrel is made up, Gauguin asks Theo to consider his return to Paris as an imaginary thing, and the letter he had written him as a bad dream. But it is only the calm before the storm.

The day before Christmas,—Theo and I were just engaged to be married and intended to go together to Holland—(I was staying in Paris with my brother A. Bonger, the friend of Theo and Vincent)—a telegram arrived from Gauguin which called Theo to Arles. Vincent had on the evening of the 24th of December, in a state of violent excitement, " un accès de fièvre chaude," (an attack of high fever) cut off a piece of his ear and brought it as a gift to a woman in a brothel. A big tumult had been raised. Roulin the postman had seen Vincent home, the police had interfered, had found Vincent bleeding and unconscious in bed, and sent him to

[1] " Paul Gauguin," by Chas. Morice, " Mercure de France," 1903.
[2] Emile Bernard, Paris, 1901, " Letters of V. van Gogh."

the hospital. Theo found him there in a severe crisis, and stayed with him during the Christmas days. The doctor considered his condition very serious. "There were moments while I was with him that he was well, but very soon after he fell back into his worries about philosophy and theology. It was painfully sad to witness, for at times all his suffering overwhelmed him and he tried to weep but he could not; poor fighter and poor, poor sufferer; for the moment nobody can do anything to relieve his sorrow and yet he feels deeply and strongly. If he might have found somebody to whom he could have disclosed his heart, it would perhaps never have gone thus far," Theo wrote to me after he had come back to Paris with Gauguin, and a day later, "there is little hope, but during his life he has done more than many others, and he has suffered and struggled more than most people could have done. If it must be that he dies, be it so, but my heart breaks when I think of it." The anxiety lasted a few more days. Dr. Rey, the house doctor of the hospital, to whose care Theo had entrusted him so urgently, kept him constantly informed. "I shall always be glad to send you tidings, for I too have a brother, I too have been separated from my family," he writes the 29th of December when the tidings are still very bad. The Protestant clergyman, the Rev. Salles, also visits Vincent and writes to Theo about his condition, and then there is last but not least the postman, Roulin, who is quite dismayed at the accident that befell his friend Vincent, with whom he spent so many pleasant hours at the "Café de la Gare" of Joseph Ginoux, and who has painted such beautiful portraits of him and his whole family! Every day he goes to the hospital for tidings and conveys them faithfully to Paris; as he is not a good penman, his two sons, Armand and Camille, serve him in turn as secretary. His wife too who posed for the "Berceuse" (Mme. Ginoux was the original of the "Arlésiénne") visits her sick friend, and the first sign of recovery is when Vincent asks her about little Marcelle, the handsome baby he had painted such a short time ago. Then there comes a sudden change for the better in his condition. The Rev. Salles writes on the 31st of December, that he had found Vincent perfectly calm, and that he is longing to start work again. A day later, Vincent himself writes a short note in pencil to reassure Theo, and on the second of January there comes another note from him, to which Dr. Rey has added a word of

reassurance. The 3rd of January an enthusiastic letter of Roulin's, "Vincent has quite recovered. He is better than before that unfortunate accident happened to him," and he, Roulin, will go to the doctor and tell him to allow Vincent to go back to his pictures. The following day they had been out and spent four hours together. "I am very sorry my first letters were so alarming and I beg your pardon; I am glad to say I have been mistaken in this case. He only regrets all the trouble he has given you, and he is sorry for the anxiety he has caused. You may be assured that I will do all I can to give him some distraction," writes Roulin.

On the 7th of January Vincent leaves the hospital, apparently entirely recovered, but, alas, at every great excitement or fatigue, the nervous attacks return . . . they last longer or shorter, but leave him also periods of almost perfect health, during which he goes back to his work with the old vigour. In February he is taken back to the hospital for a short time, but after his return to his little house, the neighbours have grown afraid of him and send a petition to the mayor, saying that it is dangerous to leave him at liberty, in consequence of which he is actually again sent to the hospital on the 27th of February—this time without any cause. Vincent himself for a whole month keeps the deepest silence about this unhappy affair, but the Rev. Salles sends Theo a faithful report. On the 2nd of March he writes, "The neighbours have raised a tumult out of nothing. The acts with which they have reproached your brother (even if they were exact), do not justify taxing a man with alienation or depriving him of his liberty. Unfortunately, the foolish act which necessitated his first removal to the hospital made people interpret in a quite unfavourable way every singular deed which the poor young man might perform; from anyone else it would remain unobserved, from him, everything takes at once a particular importance. . . . As I told you yesterday, at the hospital he has won everybody's favour and after all it is the doctor and not the chief of police who has to judge in these matters." The whole affair makes a deep impression on Vincent and again causes an attack from which he recovers with astonishing rapidity. It is again the Rev. Salles who tells Theo of Vincent's recovery. On the 18th of March he writes, "Your brother has spoken to me with perfect calmness and lucidity of mind about his condition and also about the petition signed by his neighbours. The petition

grieves him very much. 'If the police,' he says, 'had protected my liberty by preventing the children and even the grown-ups from crowding around my house and climbing the windows as they have done, (as if I were a curious animal), I should have more easily retained my self-possession, at all events I have done no harm to anyone.' In short, I found your brother transformed, may God maintain this favourable change. His condition has something indescribable, and it is impossible to understand the sudden and complete changes which have taken place in him. It is evident that as long as he is in the condition in which I found him, there can be no question of interning him in an asylum; nobody, as far as I know, would have this sinister courage." A day after this interview with the Rev. Salles, Vincent himself for the first time writes again to Theo and justly complains that such repeated emotions might become the cause of a passing nervous attack changing to a chronic evil. And with quiet resignation, he adds, "to suffer without complaint is the only lesson we have to learn in this life."

He soon recovers his liberty but continues to live in the hospital for a short time, until the Rev. Salles shall have found him new lodgings in a different part of the town. His health is so good that the Rev. Salles writes on the 19th of April, "sometimes even no traces seem left of the disease which has affected him so vividly." But when he was going to arrange with the new landlord, he suddenly avowed to the Rev. Salles that he lacked the courage to start again a new studio, and that he himself thought it best to go to an asylum for a few months. "He is fully conscious of his condition, and speaks with me about his illness, which he fears will come back, with a touching openheartedness and simplicity," writes the Rev. Salles. "I am not fit," he told me the day before yesterday, "to govern myself and my affairs. I feel quite different than I was before." The Rev. Salles had then looked around and advised the asylum of St. Remy, situated quite near Arles; he adds that the doctors at Arles approve of it, "given the state of isolation in which your brother would find himself upon leaving the hospital."

It was that which troubled Theo mostly. "Yes," he wrote to me, shortly before our marriage, in answer to my question if Vincent would not rather return to Paris, or spend some time with his mother and sisters in Holland, as he was so alone in Arles,

" one of the greatest difficulties is, that whether in good or bad health his life is so barren of distraction. But if you knew him you would feel doubly how difficult is the solution of the question what must and can be done for him.

" As you know he has long since broken with what is called convention. His way of dressing and his manners show directly that he is an unusual personality and people who see him say, ' he is mad.' To me it does not matter, but for mother that is impossible. Then there is something in his way of speaking that makes people either like or dislike him strongly. He has always people around him, who sympathize with him, but also many enemies. It is impossible for him to associate with people in an indifferent way. It is either the one or the other, even to those who are his best friends it is difficult to remain on good terms with him, as he spares nobody's feelings. If I had time for it, I would go to him and, for instance, take a walking tour with him. That is the only thing, I imagine, that would do him good. If I can find somebody among the painters who would like to do it, I will send him. But those with whom he would like to go, are somewhat afraid of him, a circumstance which the visit of Gauguin did not change, on the contrary.

"Then there is another thing which makes me afraid to have him come here. In Paris he saw so many things which he liked to paint, but again and again it was made impossible for him to do so. Models would not pose for him, he was forbidden to paint on the street, and with his irascible temper this caused many unpleasant scenes, which excited him so much that he became unapproachable to everybody and at last he got a great dislike of Paris. If he himself had wanted to come back here, I would not hesitate for a moment . . . but again I think I can do no better than to let him follow his own wishes. A quiet life is impossible for him, except alone with nature or with very simple people like the Roulins, for wherever he passes he leaves the trace of his passing. Whatever he sees that is wrong he must criticize and that often occasions strife.

"I hope that he will find, some time, a wife who will love him so much that she will share his life but it will be difficult to find one who would be fit for that. Do you remember that girl in ' Terre Vierge ' by Tourgenief, who is with the nihilists and brought the compromising papers across the frontiers? I imagine she should

be like that, somebody who has gone through life's misery to the bottom. . . . It pains me not to be able to do something for him, but for uncommon people uncommon remedies are necessary and I hope these will be found where ordinary people would not look for them."

When Vincent himself now resolves to go to St. Remy, Theo's first impression is that this may be a kind of self-sacrifice so as to be in nobody's way, and he writes to him once more asking with emphasis, whether he would not rather go to Pontaven or go to Paris.

But as Vincent sticks to his resolution Theo writes to him: "I do not consider your going to St. Remy a retreat as you call it, but simply as a temporary rest cure which will make you come back with renewed strength. I for my part attribute your illness principally to the fact that your material existence has been too much neglected. In an establishment like that of St. Remy there is a great regularity in the hours for meals, etc., and I think that regularity will do you no harm, on the contrary." When Theo has arranged everything with the director of the establishment, Dr. Peyron, a free room for Vincent and a room where he can paint, and as much liberty as possible to wander about as he likes, Vincent leaves for St. Remy on the 8th of May accompanied by the Rev. Salles who writes to Theo the next day: "Our voyage to St. Remy has been accomplished under the most excellent conditions; Monsieur Vincent was perfectly calm and himself has explained his case to the director as a man who is fully conscious of his condition. He remained with me till my departure and when I took leave of him he thanked me warmly and seemed somewhat moved, thinking of the new life he was going to lead in that house. Monsieur Peyron has assured me that he will show him all the kindness and consideration which his condition demands." How touching sounds that, "somewhat moved," at the departure of the faithful companion! His leave-taking broke the last tie that united Vincent with the outer world and he stayed behind in what was worse than the greatest loneliness, surrounded by neurotics and lunatics, with nobody to whom he could talk, nobody who understood him. Dr. Peyron was kindly disposed, but he was a reserved silent character, and the monthly letters by which he keeps Theo informed of the situation are not full

of the warm sympathy which the doctors in the hospital at Arles showed him.

A full year Vincent spent amid these cheerless surroundings, struggling with unbroken energy against the ever returning attacks of his illness, but continuing his work with the old restless zeal, which alone can keep him living now that everything else has failed him. He paints the desolate landscape which he sees from his window at sunrise and sunset, he undertakes long wanderings to paint the wide fields, bordered by the range of hills of the Alps, he paints the olive orchards with their dismally twisted branches, the gloomy cypresses, the sombre garden of the asylum, and he painted also the "Reaper," "that image of death as the great book of Nature represents it to us."

It is no longer the buoyant, sunny, triumphant work from Arles; there sounds a deeper sadder tone than the piercing clarion sound of his symphonies in yellow of the last year: his palette has become more sober, the harmonies of his pictures have passed into a minor key.

"To suffer without complaint," well had he learned that lesson; and when in August the treacherous evil attacks him again, just when he had hoped to be cured for good, he only utters a desponding sigh, "I can see no possibility of again having hope or courage."

Having painfully struggled through the winter, in which however he paints some of his most beautiful works, the "Piéta" after Delacroix, the "Resurrection of Lazarus," and the "Good Samaritan" after Rembrandt, the "Quatre heures du jour" after Millet; a few months follow during which he is not able to work, but now he feels that he would lose his energy for ever if he stayed longer in those fatal surroundings, he *must* get away from St. Remy. For some time Theo had been looking around for a fit opportunity—near Paris and yet in the country—where Vincent could live under the care of a physician, who would at the same time be a friend to him, and when he had found this at last, by the recommendation of Pisarro at Auvers sur Oise, an hour by train from Paris, where lived Dr. Gachet who had been in his youth a friend of Cèzanne, Pisarro and the other Impressionists, then Vincent returns from the south on the 17th of May 1890. First he was going to spend a few days with us in Paris; a telegram from Tarascon informed us that he was going to travel that night and

would arrive at ten in the morning. Theo could not sleep that night for anxiety—if anything happened to Vincent on the way, he had but scarcely recovered from a long and serious attack and had refused to be accompanied by anyone. How thankful we were when it was at last time for Theo to go to the station!

From the Cité Pigalle to the Gare de Lyon is a long distance, it seemed an endless time before they came back and I began to be anxious that something had happened, when I saw at last an open fiacre enter the Cité, two merry faces nodded to me, two hands waved—a moment later Vincent stood before me.

I had expected to see a patient and there stood before me a strong, broad-shouldered man, with a healthy colour, a smile on his face and an expression of great resoluteness in his whole appearance; from all the self-portraits the one before the easel is most like him at that period. Apparently there had again come such a sudden puzzling change in his state as the Rev. Salles had already observed to his great surprise at Arles.

" He seems perfectly well, he looks much stronger than Theo," was my first thought.

Then Theo drew him to the room where was the cradle of our little boy, that had been named after Vincent; silently the two brothers looked at the quietly sleeping baby—both had tears in their eyes. Then Vincent turned smilingly to me and said, pointing to the simple crotcheted cover on the cradle: " Do not cover him too much with lace, little sister."

He stayed with us three days and was all the time cheerful and lively. St. Remy was not mentioned. He went out by himself to buy olives which he used to eat every day and which he insisted on our eating too; the first morning he was up very early and was standing in his shirt-sleeves looking at his pictures of which our apartment was full; the walls were covered with them—in the bedroom the " Blooming Orchards," in the dining-room over the mantelpiece the " Potato Eaters," in the sitting-room (salon was too solemn a name for the cosy little room) the great " Landscape from Arles," and the " Night View on the Rhône," besides to the great despair of our *femme de ménage*, there were under the bed, under the sofa, under the cupboards, in the little spare room, huge piles of unframed canvases, that were now spread out on the ground and studied with great attention.

We had also many visitors, but Vincent soon perceived that the bustle of Paris did him no good and he was longing to set to work again. So he started the 21st of May for Auvers, with an introduction to Dr. Gachet, whose faithful friendship was to become his greatest support during the short time he was to spend at Auvers. We promised to come and see him soon, and he also wanted to come back to us in a few weeks to paint our portraits. In Auvers he took up his lodgings at an inn and immediately set to work.

The hilly landscape with the sloping fields and thatched roofs of the village pleased him, but what he enjoyed most was to have models again, and again to paint figures. One of the first portraits he painted was that of Dr. Gachet, who immediately felt great sympathy for Vincent, so that they spent most of their time together and became great friends—a friendship not ended by death, for Dr. Gachet and his children continued to honour Vincent's memory with rare piety, that became a form of worship, touching in its simplicity and sincerity. "The more I think of it the more I think Vincent was a giant. Not a day passes that I do not look at his pictures, I always find there a new idea, something different each day. . . . I think again of the painter and I find him a colossus. Besides he was a philosopher. . . ."

So Gachet wrote to Theo shortly after Vincent's death and speaking of the latter's love for art he says: "The word love of art is not exact, one must call it *faith*, a faith to which Vincent fell a martyr!" None of his contemporaries had understood him better.

It was curious to note that Dr. Gachet himself somewhat resembled Vincent physically (he was much older) and his son Paul—then a boy of fifteen years—resembled Theo a little.

Their house, built on a hill, was full of pictures and antiques, which received but scanty daylight through the small windows; before the house there was a splendid terraced flower-garden, behind, a large yard where all kinds of ducks, hens, turkeys and peacocks walked about in the company of four or five cats; it was the home of an original, but an original of great taste.

The doctor no longer practised in Auvers, but had an office in Paris where he gave consultations a few days a week, the rest of the time he painted and etched in his room, that looked most like the workshop of an alchemist of the Middle Ages. Soon after, the 10th of June, we received an invitation from him to come with the baby

and spend a whole day in Auvers. Vincent came to meet us at the train and he brought a bird's nest as a plaything for his little nephew and namesake. He insisted upon carrying the baby himself and had no rest until he had shown him all the animals in the yard, where a too-loudly crowing cock made the baby red in the face for fear and made him cry, whilst Vincent cried laughingly, "the cock crows cocorico," and was very proud that he had introduced his little namesake to the animal world. We lunched in the open air and after lunch took a long walk; the day was so peacefully quiet, so happy, that nobody would have suspected how tragically a few weeks later our happiness was to be destroyed for ever. In the first days of July, Vincent visited us once more in Paris; we were exhausted by a serious illness of the baby—Theo was again considering the old plan of leaving Goupil and setting up his own business, Vincent was not satisfied with the place where the pictures were kept, and our removal to a larger apartment was talked of; so those were days of much worry and anxiety Many friends came to visit Vincent, among others, Aurier, who had written recently his famous article about Vincent,[1] and who now came again to look at the pictures with the painter himself, and Toulouse Lautrec who stayed for lunch with us and made many jokes with Vincent about an undertaker they had met on the stairs. Guillaumin was also expected to come, but it became too much for Vincent, so he did not wait for this visit but hurried back to Auvers —overtired and excited, as his last letters and pictures show, in which the threatening catastrophe seems approaching like the ominous black birds that dart through the storm over the cornfields.

"I hope he is not getting melancholy or that a new attack is threatening again, everything has gone so well lately," Theo wrote to me the 20th of July, after he had taken me with the baby to Holland and himself had returned to Paris for a short time, till he also should take his holidays. On the 25th he wrote to me, "there is a letter from Vincent which seems very incomprehensible; when will there come a happy time for him? He is so thoroughly good." That happy time was never to come for Vincent; fear of the again threatening attack or the attack itself, drove him to death.

[1] "Les Isolés," "Mercure de France," Janvier 1890.

On the evening of the 27th of July, he tried to kill himself with a revolver. Dr. Gachet wrote that same evening to Theo the following note, "With the greatest regret I must bring you bad tidings. Yet I think it my duty to write to you immediately. At nine o'clock in the evening of to-day, Sunday, I was sent for by your brother Vincent who wanted to see me at once. I went there and found him very ill. He has wounded himself . . . as I did not know your address and he refused to give it to me, this note will reach you through Goupil." The letter reached Theo in consequence only the next morning and he immediately started for Auvers. From there he wrote to me the same day, the 28th of July: "This morning a Dutch painter[1] who also lives in Auvers brought me a letter from Dr. Gachet that contained bad tidings about Vincent and asked me to come. Leaving everything I went and found him somewhat better than I expected. I will not write the particulars, they are too sad, but you must know dearest, that his life may be in danger. . . .

"He was glad that I came and we are together all the time . . . poor fellow, very little happiness fell to his share and no illusions are left him. The burden grows too heavy for him, at times he feels so alone. He often asks for you and the baby, and said that you would not imagine there was so much sorrow in life. Oh! if we could give him some new courage to live. Don't make yourself too anxious, his condition has been so hopeless before, but his strong constitution deceived the doctors." That hope proved idle. Early in the morning of the 29th of July Vincent passed away.

Theo wrote to me, "one of his last words was: 'I wish I could die now,' and his wish was fulfilled. A few moments and all was over. He had found the rest he could not find on earth. . . . The next morning there came from Paris and elsewhere eight friends who decked the room where the coffin stood with his pictures, which came out wonderfully. There were many flowers and wreaths. Dr. Gachet was the first to bring a large bunch of sunflowers, because Vincent was so fond of them. . . .

He rests in a sunny spot amidst the cornfields. . . ."

From a letter of Theo's to his mother: "One cannot write how grieved one is nor find any comfort. It is a grief that will

last and which I certainly shall never forget as long as I live; the only thing one might say is, that he himself has the rest he was longing for . . . life was such a burden to him; but now, as often happens, everybody is full of praise for his talents. . . . Oh! mother he was so my own, own brother."

Theo's frail health was broken. Six months later, on the 25th of January 1891, he had followed his brother.

They rest side by side in the little cemetery between the cornfields of Auvers.

J. VAN GOGH-BONGER.

December, 1913.

IN MEMORIAM J. VAN GOGH-BONGER

LOYALTY DEVOTION LOVE

Johanna Gesina Bonger was born on October 4th 1862 in Amsterdam, the fifth of a family of seven children. Her father was in the insurance business. As her father and some of her brothers and sisters were great lovers of music and played different instruments, they often had musical evenings at home, which she much enjoyed. As a girl my mother was reputed as being extremely gay and lively. After finishing at the high school, she studied English, staying a few months in London to work in the British Museum.

When seventeen years old she started a diary, partly in English, in which she wrote down her feelings with a remarkable frankness and clearness. After completing her studies at the age of twenty-two, she became a teacher in a girls' boarding school in Elburg, a small dead city on the Zuider Zee. Later she taught for a short while in the high school at Utrecht. In 1889 she married Theo van Gogh, a friend of Andries, her elder brother, who lived in Paris.

In 1891, after a year and a half of great happiness, my mother returned from Paris to Holland, a widow with a baby, her furniture, and a lot of paintings which were then considered a worthless inheritance. A valuation list still exists, made up by a painter who afterwards became famous, which contains a few French pictures by Monticelli, Gauguin and others, and ends with: "200 paintings by Vincent van Gogh . . . 2000 guilders." And indeed materially this was about the truth. Pressure was brought upon my mother from more than one quarter to destroy them, but she steadily refused. She did not want to return to her parents' home, but wished to be independent. In the spring of 1891 she went to live in Bussum, about half an hour from Amsterdam, then still a quiet village.

The diary, which ceases during the very happy time of her marriage, begins again in November 1891 with: "All is but a dream" (*tout n'est que rêve*). The best impression of what she felt and did during the first few years can be gathered from the diary, of which only a few fragments (translated) can be given here:—

Nov. 15th 1891.—To give him (the child) healthy fresh air, I came to live in Bussum; and to earn a living for both of us I am taking boarders,—now I must take care that I shall not be degraded to a household drudge by all the housekeeping worries, but I must keep my spirit alive. . . . Theo has taught me much about art—no, let me rather say, he has taught me much about life. . . . Besides the child he left me yet another task—the work of Vincent—to show it and to let it be appreciated as much as possible. I am not without a goal, but I feel lonely and deserted. . . .

Nov. 18th 1891.—The first half year that I lived here cost me such an immense effort to learn the most ordinary household duties that I had no thought left for anything else. . . . Now, at last, the household machine is in working order, and though it keeps me busy the whole day still it no longer takes all my thoughts and in the evenings I can work again. . . .

Feb. 24th 1892.—This afternoon two painters—Verkade and Serusier, came to see me—the latter a Parisian. It was a treat to talk French once more. They thought Vincent's work beautiful. It was so unusual to hear exclamations of admiration. People here in Holland are not generous with appreciation when it concerns the work of Vincent. It reminded me of those good days in Paris. . . . During January and February I have been busy all the time with the paintings. After an endless correspondence there are now finally ten paintings with Buffa in Amsterdam, twenty with Oldenzeel[1] in Rotterdam; in December an exhibition of Vincent's drawings in Pulchri,[2] and on Thursday the one in Arti.[3] It was a fine evening; everybody whom I wanted came to see them. It was crowded—people liked them. . . . Now I am going to start with the letters in earnest and with zeal. . . . I have now just about brought my diary

[1] Both art-dealers.
[2] The Painters' Association in the Hague.
[3] The Painters' Association in Amsterdam.

JOHANNA VAN GOGH-BONGER

From a drawing by J. C. Gosschalk [1910]

up to date, and will faithfully continue with it. The child must later on be able to judge the life of his mother—what she has thought, felt, willed. Her diary and the letters of his father and his uncle—with these he can build up their lives out of the past.

March 3rd 1892.—This evening a letter came to say that the exhibition at the Hague will soon be open—at the middle of the month. What a storm of emotions this will cause! We must gather all our courage before then, and be resolute in face of the enemies—for how many they will be! . . .

March 20th 1892.—Some of Vincent's paintings are on view at Oldenzeel's in Rotterdam. In the *Rotterdammer Courant* there were two articles by Mr. de Meester, and a very enthusiastic one in another journal. It is an unspeakable satisfaction to me that he is becoming more and more known. . . . There seems to be now growing a steady stream of appreciation of the work—nobody knows from whence it comes, but it exists and expands. . . .

March 25th 1892.—A letter from the Hague that they will arrange for an exhibition of Vincent's work. That is another load off my mind. The paintings are now sent off—the ship is at sea! . . .

March 29th 1892.—This evening I have a letter from the "Kunstkring"; the exhibition is to be held on May 6th in the new galleries—it has been finally fixed. . . .

April 7th 1892.—A few days ago mother van Gogh arrived here. . . . In the afternoon we sit cosily in the porch and talk about everything—about family affairs—everything of the past; I like to hear that so much. I must find out much about Vincent, and then I will write it all down. . . .

May 13th 1892.—Next Sunday there will be the exhibition at the Hague. What will that day bring? Satisfaction or disappointment. How I have longed for it! . . .

May 15th 1892.—The exhibition is again postponed. Now it will be definitely to-morrow. . . .

May 16th 1892.—The opening is over. It was not beautiful, therefore not enough care had been spent on it, but there was room and light to see the pictures, that was all. Many people came in the afternoon. . . .

Sept. 26th 1892.—Nearest to my heart lies the exhibition of Vincent's pictures which will take place in the Panorama in

December. I have myself discussed it with van Kesteren. . . . That is again something to look forward to. . . . To-morrow I will do some translating. I must earn something more.

For years she translated in the evenings short stories by foreign authors for *De Kroniek*, a weekly wherein modern literary and political life found expression.

In a letter to a friend she writes regarding Vincent's letters:—

"I have lived with them from the moment that Theo became ill. The first lonely evening that I spent again in our house I took the package of letters—for I knew that I would find him again in them, and evening after evening that was my consolation in all my great misery. At that time I did not seek Vincent therein, but only Theo—every word, every detail concerning him—I longed for it. I read those letters not with my eyes only—I was absorbed in them with all my soul. I read and re-read them until I had a complete picture of Vincent clearly before me. And now, imagine when I came to Holland, realising the greatness—the indescribable nobility of that lonely artist's life—what I felt about the indifference which was shown to me from all sides where it concerned Vincent and his work. Sometimes it became very acute. I remember how last year on the anniversary of Vincent's death I went out late in the evening—I could not bear it in the house. The wind blew and it rained and it was pitch dark, and everywhere in the houses I saw lights and people sitting cosily together—and I felt myself so alone that I understood for the first time what he must have felt in those times when everybody turned away from him, and it was to him "as if there was no place for him on the earth. . . ."

Our rather large house was sometimes full of people; the memory of many faded out, but a few acquaintances and lifelong friendships remained. In later years several people who played a certain part in the artistic or intellectual life of the country, stayed with us. Our living room was not large and was at the same time a dining-room; it was somewhat crowded at times, but it was very cosy. On the mantelpiece hung Vincent's "Potato Eaters," over the cupboard the large "Landscape in

Provence," above the door the "Outer-boulevard." Over the piano hung four Monticelli pictures; further there were Vincent's "Violet Vase with Flowers," and portraits of Bernard and Guillaumin. From the edge of the white porcelain Belgian oil lamp hung some Japanese prints as shades. In another room was the large Gauguin over my father's canopy, which was made of a Persian rug. In the hallway downstairs were the drawings of the "Fountain" and the "Court in the Hospital of St. Remy." In our bedroom on a golden yellow wallpaper hung the three—"Blossoming Orchards," the "Almond Blossom," the "Pieta" after Delacroix, and "La Veillée." There was a garden round the house, with many trees, and the country made my mother, city-bred as she was, discover nature.

Notwithstanding all the work of managing the house, my childhood recollections are that my mother was always with me the whole day; it was for me the best and finest of homes. People came from time to time to see the pictures. The arrangements for exhibitions, which became more and more numerous, gave my mother much work: packing the pictures, often including the making of cases, was done in the house, which caused a lot of dust, noise, and cleaning up. Fortunately there was a carpenter in the village, who had been taught how to handle and pack paintings. I remember trips with my mother to the station to see if cases had arrived.

My mother formed her opinions independently, and differed sometimes from those around her. She became a member of the then still young Socialist party, which she remained to the end of her life. This brought her into contact with a new group of people. However, she did not take any part in public life, considering that the education of her child, providing a home, and caring for her second husband in later years, and the other matters, were more important and needed the best she had to give.

In 1901 she married Joh. Cohen Gosschalk, painter and art-critic, who was much younger than she. He had a finely cultivated sensitive spirit, and the surrounding atmosphere of Vincent's pictures did not influence his own way of painting. Notwithstanding much sickness this was a happy marriage; after he was gone (1912), my mother said once: "He made me often feel and see clearer." I loved him and owe much to him.

In 1903 we moved to Amsterdam, where the same arrangement of the pictures was repeated in our house; the three "Orchards" together, the "Landscape in Provence" over the sideboard, the Gauguin over the same canopy, the Monticelli's over the piano, Vincent's "Pieta" and the "Veillée" in the bedroom. Everything was arranged with great care and neatness; the whole interior had great distinction. It remained so for more than twenty-three years.

In the summer of 1905 the largest exhibition that will ever be held of Vincent's work took place in the Municipal Museum. Cohen Gosschalk wrote the introduction for the catalogue. The number of visitors was less than one-third of those at the much smaller exhibition in the spring of 1926 in the same galleries. At that time the Rijksmuseum did not even want to take any of Vincent's pictures on loan, but consented to exhibit two drawings, if these were presented.

The first of the foreign countries where many exhibitions were held was Germany; Cassirer in Berlin had quite a number. The first museum to have pictures was the Folkwang Museum in Hagen; however, they were not allowed to stay there, for a few years ago they appeared again in Amsterdam in dealers' hands (amongst others, the "Retour du marché" after Millet). In 1910 Vincent's paintings were shown in London for the first time (at the Post Impressionists' Exhibition), and many people still laughed at them. Now the "Sunflowers" is in the National Gallery.

During all these years my mother had been steadily busy arranging the letters, many of which bore no date and had to be placed by comparison of facts or by references in the text. At first she copied the letters by hand; later they were typewritten. The proofs also were corrected by my mother. The German edition was to appear shortly after the Dutch one, which consisted of two volumes in Dutch and one volume with the letters from Arles and later, in French. The German translation was also revised by her.

The first volume in Dutch appeared in the spring of 1914,[1] and great was her joy when she finally received it. She was then staying with me in a rather lonely place in the Pyrenees, where

[1] By arrangement with the Maatschappij voor Goede en Goedkoope Lectuur (Society for the publication of good and cheap books at Amsterdam), the publishers of the Dutch World's Library.

she corrected the proofs of the second volume. The second volume I found at home when I returned to Amsterdam in November 1914. The third volume my mother brought with her in the spring of 1915, when she came to Paris to stay with us. In the autumn of that year we left her in Amsterdam when we went to New York. She followed us the next summer, and once she was used to the new surroundings, she started to translate the letters into English. She tried to render as well as possible the quaint style which was far more difficult than a literal translation. Once more we left her behind, going to Japan, and as she had made good friends, as she did everywhere, we did not leave her with heavy hearts, and as usual she did not show one either. Being interested in so many different things, she had grown very fond of America. The next summer she returned to Holland, where she finished the English translation of the two Dutch volumes and began on the third, French, volume.

When she died on September 2nd 1925, she had reached letter 652. To see the English edition published was one of her heart's desires, but she steadily refused to hasten publication by making a selection. She lived to see the second edition in Dutch[1] which is quite a triumph for a book of such large size in that language.

Having so far described what my mother did for the memory of Vincent and Theo, I cannot close without a few remarks on her personality. Without these the description of her character would be incomplete. She had a cheerful, lively nature, and was always open to everything new and worth while. Also she knew how to enjoy simple things. All this made her presence and her surroundings very pleasant. She was fond of reading, and had a special liking for biographies. Young people had much attraction for her, and in later years often came to her with their difficulties.

There was always perfect confidence between us, and when we were apart her letters took somewhat the place of the diary, which ends in the Bussum period.

" Be calm and hopeful " ran her cable one of the very few times when I was in trouble, and that comes to my mind now that she is no longer with us.

V. W. van Gogh.

[1] Third and fourth thousand.

VINCENT VAN GOGH

THE HAGUE

August 1872–May 1873

Vincent was since 1869 an employee in the Art Gallery of Goupil, the head of which was Mr. Tersteeg, and Theo, who was still at school at Oisterwijk, had spent a few days with him at his lodgings with the family Roos, on the Beestenmarkt.

1

Dear Theo, The Hague August 1872.

Thanks for your letter. I was glad to hear you arrived safely home. I missed you the first days, and it was strange not to find you when I came home in the evening.

We have had pleasant days together, and between times have taken many a nice walk and done some sight seeing.

What terrible weather! You must have suffered from the heat on your walks to Oisterwijk. Yesterday the races took place in celebration of the Exhibition, but the illumination and the fireworks were put off because of the bad weather, so it was well that you did not stay to see them. Compliments from the family Hanebeek and Roos.

Always your loving
Vincent.

2

Dear Theo, The Hague Dec. 13 1872.

That was good news I read just now in father's letter[1], I heartily congratulate you upon it.

I am sure you will like it, it is such a fine business. It will be a great change for you. I am so glad that we shall both be in the

[1] It had been decided that Theo should also become an art-dealer, and on the first of January he was to enter the firm of Goupil at Brussels, where his uncle Hein had formerly been the head, as Mr. Schmidt was then.

same profession and in the same firm. We must be sure to write to each other regularly.

I hope that I shall see you before you leave, we still have many things to talk over.

I think that Brussels is a very pleasant city, but it will be strange for you in the beginning. At all events, write to me soon.

Well, adieu, this is only a short note, written in a hurry, but I wanted to tell you that I was so pleased with the news.

Wishing you good luck, believe me always,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

I pity you, that you have to go to Oisterwijk every day, in this beastly weather. Compliments from the family Roos.

3

Dear Theo, The Hague Jan. 18th '73.

I heard from home that you arrived safe and sound at Brussels and that your first impression was good.

I know so well how strange you must feel in the beginning, but don't lose courage, you'll get on all right.

You must soon write to me how you are getting along and how you like your boarding-house. I hope it will be satisfactory. Father wrote to me, that you are on pleasant terms with Mr. Schmidt; that is right, I think he is a good fellow from whom you can learn a great deal.

What happy days we spent together at Christmas, I think of them so often; you also will remember them a long time, as they were the last days you spent at home.

Don't forget to tell me what pictures you see and which you like best.

I am very busy just now in the beginning of the year.

My new year began well, my salary was raised 10 guilders, so that I now earn 50 guilders a month, and besides I got 50 guilders as a present. Isn't that splendid! I hope now to be able to shift for myself.

I am so glad that you also are in the same firm. It is such a

splendid house, the longer you are in it the more ambition it gives you.

The beginning is perhaps more difficult than anything else, but keep heart, it will come out all right.

Will you ask Schmidt what is the price of the " Album Corot, lithographs by Emile Vernier "? Somebody asked for it at the store, and I know they have it in Brussels.

Next time, when I write again, I'll send you my picture, which I had taken last Sunday. Have you already been to the Palais Ducal? Don't fail to go there when you have a chance.

Well, boy, keep courage, all the friends send you their compliments and good wishes. Give my regards to Schmidt and Eduard and write to me soon. Adieu.

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

You know my address is,

Lange Beestenmarkt, 32

or Goupil & Co., Plaats.

4

Dear Theo, The Hague Jan. 28th 1873.

I was glad you answered me so soon and that you like Brussels and have found a nice boarding-house. Don't lose heart if it is very difficult at times, everything will come out all right and nobody can in the beginning do as he wishes.

How I pity Uncle Hein, I heartily hope he will recover, but, Theo, I fear he will not. Last summer he was still full of ambition and had so many plans and told me that business was flourishing. It's very sad. Last Sunday I was at Uncle Cor's and spent a very pleasant day there as you can imagine, and saw so many beautiful things. As you know, Uncle has just come back from Paris and brought some beautiful pictures and drawings with him. I remained in Amsterdam till Monday morning and went to see the museums again. Do you know that they are going to build a large new museum in Amsterdam, instead of the Trippenhuis?

I think it is right, for the Trippenhuis is small and many pictures are hung so that they can hardly be seen.

How I should have liked to see that picture by Cluysenaer, I have only seen a few pictures of his and those I liked very much. Tell me if that other picture is by "*Alfred*" Stevens, or else what the first name is. I know the photograph after Rotta[1] and have even seen the picture at the Exhibition in Brussels. Be sure to let me know what pictures you see, I am always glad to know. The album of which you gave me the title is not the one I meant, which is *only* lithographs after Corot. But I thank you for the trouble you have taken. I hope to get a letter from sister Anna soon, she is rather a backward writer of late. Do surprise her with a letter, that would be such a pleasure to her. I suppose you are very busy, but that is not bad. It is cold here and they are skating already. I walk as much as I can. I wonder if you will have any chance to skate. Enclosed you will find my photograph, but if you write home don't mention it, as you know it is for father's birthday. I have already sent you my congratulations upon that day. My best compliments to Uncle and Aunt, also to Mr. Schmidt and Eduard. Always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Kind regards from everybody at Hanebeek's, Aunt Fie and Roos

[1] Italian painter (Venice).

Dear Theo, The Hague March 17th 1873.

It is time for you to hear again from me, and I also am longing to hear how you are and how Uncle Hein is, so I hope that you will be able to find time to write to me.

I suppose you have heard that I am going to London and probably very soon. I do hope that we shall see each other before then. If there is any chance I shall go to Helvoirt at Easter, but it depends on Iterson, who is away on business. I cannot go away before he has come back.

It will be quite a different life for me in London as I shall probably have to live alone in rooms, so I'll have to look after many things about which I don't have to worry now.

I am longing very much to see London, as you can imagine, but still I am sorry to leave here; now that it is decided that I shall go away, I feel how much I am attached to the Hague. Well it cannot be helped, and I intend not to take things too hard. It will be splendid for my English, I can understand it well enough, but I cannot speak it as well as I should wish.

From Anna I heard you had your picture taken. If you have one to spare don't forget me.

How is Uncle Hein? not better I am afraid, and how is Aunt? Can Uncle keep himself busy, and does he suffer much pain? Give him my hearty greetings. I think of him so often. How is business going? I think you must be rushed with work as we are too. You will feel at home in the business by this time.

How is your boarding house, does it still please you? That's an important thing. *Be sure to tell me more about the pictures you see.* A fortnight ago I was in Amsterdam to see an exhibition of the pictures that go from here to Vienna.

It was very interesting, and I am curious to know what figure the Dutch artists will cut in Vienna. I am also curious to see the English painters, we see so little of them, as almost everything remains in England. In London Goupil has no gallery, but sells only directly to art dealers.

Uncle Vincent will come here at the end of this month, I am longing to hear more particulars from him. The Hanebeeks and Aunt Fie always ask how you are and send you their best greetings.

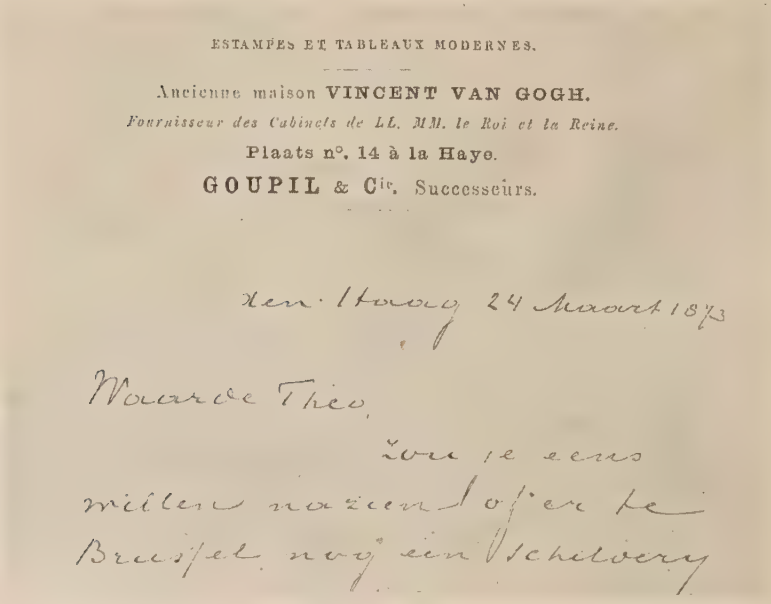
What delightful weather we have! I enjoy it as much as I can, last Sunday I went out boating with Willem.[1]

How I should have liked to stay here this summer, but we must take things as they are. And now adieu. Best wishes and write to me soon. Say good-bye for me to Uncle and Aunt, Mr. Schmidt and Eduard. I am longing for Easter. Always your loving brother,

Vincent.

Theo, I must strongly advise you to smoke a pipe, that is a remedy against the blues, which I happen to have now and then of late. I just received your letter, many thanks. I like the photograph very much, it is a good likeness. As soon as I know something more about my going to Helvoirt I will let you know at once: it would be nice if you could come on the same day. Adieu.

[1] Willem Valkes, cousin of the Roos family and Vincent's fellow boarder.


ESTAMPES ET TABLEAUX MODERNES.

Ancienne maison **VINCENT VAN GOGH.**

Fournisseur des Cabinets de LL. MM. le Roi et la Reine.

Plaats n°. 14 à la Haye.

GOUPIL & C^ie^. Successeurs.

Den Haag 24 Maart 1873

Waarde Theo,

Ook ik eens
willen naar Helvoirt te
Brussel nog een Scheltema

6

Dear Theo, The Hague March 24th 1873.

Would you kindly find out if there is still a picture of Schotel in Brussels? It was sent from here in commission, on the 6th of May, 1870, but perhaps Uncle has already sent it back to Paris.

If that is not the case please have it returned here immediately, we have a chance of selling it but it is urgent. Last summer I saw it at your gallery, so I think it will still be there.

Give my compliments to Uncle and Aunt, Mr. Schmidt and Eduard.

I suppose you have got my letter already? à Dieu and best wishes.

Vincent.

7

Dear Theo, The Hague May 5th 1873.

You must forgive me for having forgotten your birthday. My best wishes. I hope this year will be a happy one for you and that you will like your work more and more. My time will soon be up. On Saturday I go home to take leave and start on Sunday for Paris.[1] I fear however that it will be Monday before I start, and that I shall have to stay over Sunday in Helvoirt. I hope that I shall be able to write you in time when I shall pass Brussels, but perhaps I may not be able to do so, as I do not know for sure when I have to be in Paris.

How are Uncle and Aunt, have they moved already? You must write me about this soon, I give you my address below. I am writing in a hurry, you can imagine I am very busy. Adieu, best wishes. Compliments to Uncle, Aunt, Mr. Schmidt and Eduard.

Always your loving

Vincent.

V. W. van Gogh,

c/o Messrs. Goupil & Co.,

17 Southampton Street, Strand, London.

Don't forget to write V. W. van Gogh, because it might cause confusion in Uncle Vincent's mail, as he is only called V.

[1] He was going to London by way of Paris.

Dear Theo, The Hague May 9th 1873.

Monday morning I start from Helvoirt for Paris, and shall pass Brussels at 2.7 p.m. Come to the station if you can, I shall be so glad to see you. I must not forget to tell you that I showed your photograph to Mrs. Tersteeg and she would like very much to have one. Is there a chance of your having another and sending it to me ?

If not possible now, think of it another time.

Theo, you have no idea how kind everybody here is to me, and you can imagine how sorry I am to have to leave so many friends.

à Dieu, lad. Compliments to Uncle and Aunt, hope to see you soon. Vincent.

Inquire if you have to be at the north or the south station.

LONDON

June 18 1873–May 18 1875

The first year of Vincent's stay in London was perhaps the most happy, and the most care-free of his life. His salary was large enough to live on, he felt great interest in his work and in all the new attractions that London offered him, and from August '73, he found a delightful home at Mrs. Loyer's, the widow of a curate from the south of France, who with her daughter Ursula kept a small day school and had a few paying guests. Vincent felt great sympathy for the mother, fell in love with the daughter and spent with them a happy time, as the cheerful tone of his letters clearly shows.

But Ursula was already secretly engaged, and though Vincent when he heard this tried his influence to break the engagement, he did not succeed. In July '74 he came home for the holidays in a melancholy depressed mood. From that time, there is a change in his character, he inclines more and more toward a religious fanaticism, he leads a secluded life, living alone in rooms and seeing nobody, he rarely writes home, which gives his parents great anxiety. "Poor boy he does not take life easily," writes mother, and father says, "His living at the Loyer's with all those secrets has done him no good, I am glad he left there, but it must have been a bitter disappointment to him, that his hopes were not realized."

In October Uncle Vincent uses his influence to get his nephew a temporary transfer to the house in Paris, hoping that the change will do him good, but the removal has no effect, and in the same depressed mood he returns to London in January '75, where he stays till May of the same year.

9

Dear Theo, London June 13 '73.

My address is c/o Messrs. Goupil & Co., 17 Southampton Street, Strand, London. You will be longing to hear from me so I will not keep you waiting any longer for a letter. From home I heard that you are living with Mr. Schmidt now and that father has been to see you.

I heartily hope this will please you better than your former boarding-house, and I'm sure it will. Write to me soon, I am longing for a letter and tell me how you spend your day, etc.

Especially, you must tell me what pictures you have seen lately and also if some new etchings or lithographs have been published. Tell me as much as you can about these things, for here I do not see much of them as it is only a wholesale house. Considering the circumstances I am doing pretty well here.

The boarding-house where I stay pleases me so far. There are also three Germans, who are very fond of music and play the piano and sing, so we spend very pleasant evenings together. I am not so busy here as I was in the Hague, as I work only from nine until six, and on Saturdays we close at four o'clock. I live in one of the suburbs of London, where it is comparatively quiet. It reminds me a little of Tilburg or some such place.

In Paris I spent some very pleasant days, and, as you can imagine, I enjoyed all the beautiful things I saw at the exhibitions and in the Louvre and the Luxembourg. The house in Paris is splendid and much bigger than I thought, especially the Place de l'Opera.[1]

Life is very expensive here, my boarding house costs me 18 shillings a week, washing excepted, and then I have still to take my dinner in the city. Last Sunday I went to the country with Mr. Obach, my principal, to Boxhill, that is a high hill about six hours by road from London, partly of chalk and overgrown with box and at one side a wood of high oak trees. The country is beautiful here, quite different from Holland or Belgium. Everywhere you see charming parks with high trees and shrubs. Everyone is allowed to walk there. At Easter I made an interesting excursion with those Germans, but these gentlemen spent a great deal of money and in the future I shall not go out with them any more.

I was glad to hear from home that Uncle Hein's health is good. Give him and Aunt my best greetings and tell them something about me. Give my compliments to Mr. Schmidt and Eduard and write to me soon. à Dieu, best wishes,

Vincent.

10

Dear Theo, London July 20 '73.

Thanks for your letter, which was very welcome. I am glad you are doing well and that you like living with Mr. Schmidt. Mr. Obach had been pleased to meet you. I hope that in the

[1] The house Goupil had three branches in Paris, the main branch in the Rue Chatpla, another on the Boulevard Montmartre, of which Theo afterwards was the head, and a third on the Place de l'Opera.

future we shall do much business together. That picture of Linder is very beautiful.

As to the photo engravings, I know a little about how they are made, but I never saw it done, and I don't know it well enough to explain.

At first English art did not seem very attractive to me, one must get used to it. But there are clever painters here, among others, Millais, who has painted the "Huguenot," "Ophelia," etc., of which I think you know the engravings; his things are beautiful. Then there is Boughton of whom you know the "Puritain allant à l'église" in our Galerie Photographique; I have seen very beautiful things by him. Then among the old painters Constable, he is a landscape painter who lived about thirty years ago,he is splendid, his work reminds me of Diaz and Daubigny; and Reynolds and Gainsborough, who have especially painted very beautiful ladies' portraits, and then Turner whose engravings you must have seen.

Some good French painters are living here, among others Tissot, of whose work there are several photographs in our Galerie Photographique; also Otto Weber and Heilbuth. The latter is at present making beautiful pictures in the manner of Linder. You must write me some time if there are photographs after Wauters, except Hugo Van der Goes and Mary of Burgundy, and if you know photographs from the pictures of Lagye and of Braekeleer.

It is not the old Braekeleer I mean, but I think a son of his, who at the last exhibition at Brussels had three beautiful pictures called "Antwerp," "The School," and "The Atlas."

I am quite contented here, I walk much, the neighbourhood where I live is quiet, pleasant and fresh, and I was really very lucky in finding it. Still I often think with regret of the delightful Sundays at Scheveningen and other things, but what is the use of worrying?

Thanks for what you wrote me about pictures. If you happen to see anything by Lagye, de Braekeleer, Wauters, Maris, Tissot, George Saal, Jundt, Ziem, Mauve, you must not forget to tell me, those are the painters I am very fond of and of whom you probably will see something. Enclosed, a copy of the poem about the painter, "Who entered the 'Swan,' the inn where he boarded," which I am sure you remember.[1]

[1] Flemish poem by Jan van Beers.

That is typical Brabant, and I am fond of it, L. copied it for me the last evening I was home. How I should like to have you here, what pleasant days we spent together at the Hague, I think so often of that walk on the Ryswyk road, where we drank milk after the rain, at the mill.

When we send back the pictures we have from you, I will send you a portrait of that mill by Weissenbruch, you remember him perhaps, the merry Weiss, is his surname—*that road of Ryswyk holds memories for me which are perhaps the most beautiful I have. If we meet again we will perhaps talk about them once more.* And now boy, I wish you well, think of me from time to time and write to me soon, it is such a delight to get a letter.

Vincent.

II

Dear Theo, London Sept. 13 1873.

In my letter to Uncle Hein, I enclose a little note for you. I wonder if you have been in Helvoirt for Mother's birthday and how you enjoyed it.

Did you get my letter and the lithograph after Weissenbruch, which I put in the box with the pictures ? Oh, lad, I should like to have you here to show you my new lodgings, of which you certainly have heard. I now have a room such as I always longed for, without a slanting ceiling and without blue paper with a green border. I live with a very amusing family now, they keep a school for little boys.

One Saturday some time ago I went boating on the Thames with two Englishmen. That was very beautiful. Yesterday, I saw an exhibition of Belgian art, where I noticed many of the same pictures that were at the Brussels exhibition.

There were several beautiful things by Alb. and Julien de Vriendt, Cluysenaer, Wauters, Coosemans, Gabriel, de Schampheleer, etc.

Have you ever seen anything of Terlinde's, if so tell me. It was a real pleasure to see those Belgian pictures, the English ones are with a few exceptions very bad and uninteresting. Some time ago I saw one which represented a kind of fish or dragon, six

yards long. It was awful. And then a little man, who came to kill the dragon above mentioned. I think the whole represented, "The Archangel Michael, killing Satan." Adieu, boy, best wishes and write soon,

Vincent.

Another English picture is, "Satan possessing the Herd of Swine at the Lake of Gaderena."

That represented about fifty black pigs and swine that ran helter skelter down the mountain and skipped one over the other into the sea. But that was a very clever picture by Prinsep.

I just received your letter. It will be a great change for you to go to the Hague. I imagine it will be hard to leave beautiful, pleasant Brussels, but you will enjoy the Hague too. Thanks for what you wrote to me about the pictures. That picture by Millet must have been splendid. à Dieu, I will write soon again.

12

Dear Theo, London Nov. 19 1873.

I want you to hear from me soon after your arrival at the Hague. I am longing to hear what has been your first impression of your new position and home. I heard that Mr. Schmidt gave you such a beautiful souvenir. That proves you have been very satisfactory in every respect. I am glad that we now work in the same house of Goupil. Lately we have had here many pictures and drawings, and we sold a great many, but it is not enough yet; it must become something more during and solid. I think there is still much work to do in England, but it will not succeed at once, and of course the first thing necessary is to have good pictures, and that will be very difficult. Well, we must take things as they are, and must make the best of it.

How is business in Holland? Here the common engravings after Brochart do not sell at all, the good burin engravings sell pretty well. From the "Venus Anadyomene" after Ingres we sold already twenty *épreuves d'artiste*. But it is a pleasure to see how well the photographs sell, especially the coloured ones, and there is a big profit in them.

13

We sell the photographs Musée Goupil & Co., only *en papillotes*, on an average of a hundred a day. I think you will like the work in the house at the Hague as soon as you have got used to it. I am sure you will like your home with the Roos family.

Walk as much as you can if you find time for it. Give my best love to everybody at the Roos'. You must write to me some time what painters you like best among the ancients as well as among the moderns. You must certainly do that, as I am curious to know.

Go to the museum as often as you can; it is a good thing to know the old painters also, and if you have the chance, read about art and read especially the art magazines, "Gazette des Beaux-Arts," etc.

As soon as there is an opportunity I will send you a book by Burger about the museums at the Hague and Amsterdam, when you have read it please find an occasion to send it back.

Ask Iterson to write to me when he has time, and especially to send me a list of the painters that have been awarded medals at the Paris exhibition. Is Somerwil still in the office or did he leave when you arrived?

I am all right here; I have a pleasant home and although the house here is not so interesting as the house in the Hague, it is perhaps well that I am here, and especially later on when the sale of pictures will grow more important, I shall perhaps be of use. And then, I cannot tell you how interesting it is to see London and English business and the way of living in England, which differs so much from ours. You must have had pleasant days at home; how I should like to see them all again.

Give my compliments to everybody who inquires after me, especially at Tersteeg's, Hanebeek, Aunt Fie, Stockum and Roos, and tell Betsy Tersteeg something about me when you see her. And now, boy, good luck to you, write to me soon.

Vincent.

Do you have my room at the Roos, or the one where you slept last summer?

Dear Theo, London Jan. 1874.

Thanks for your letter, I heartily wish you a happy New Year. I know that you are doing well at the Hague for I heard it from Mr. Tersteeg. From your letter I see that you have a great love for art, that is a good thing, lad. I am glad you like Millet, Jacque, Scheyer, Lambinet, Frans Hals, etc., for like Mauve says, "that's the stuff."

Yes, that picture by Millet, "The Angelus," that's the thing, that is beauty, that is poetry. How I should like to talk with you about art, but now we must write about it often; *admire* as much as you can, *most people do not admire enough.* Here follow some names of painters whom I like especially, Scheffer, Delaroche, Hebert, Hamon, Leys, Tissot, Lagye, Boughton, Millais, Thys Maris, de Groux, de Braekeleer Jr., Millet, Jules Breton, Feyon-Perrin, Eugene Feyen, Brion, Jundt, George Saal, Israëls, Anker, Knaus, Vautier, Jourdan, Compte-Calix, Rochussen, Meissonier, Madrazzo, Ziem, Boudin, Gerome, Fromentin, Decamps, Bonington, Diaz, Th. Rousseau, Troyon, Dupré, Corot, Paul Huet, Jacque, Otto Weber, Daubigny, Bernier, Emile Breton, Chenu, César de Cock, Mlle Collart, Bodmer, Koekkoek, Schelfhout, Weissenbruch and last but not least, Maris and Mauve. But I might go on like that for I don't know how long, and then there are the old masters, and I am sure I have forgotten some of the best modern ones.

Try to walk as much as you can and keep your love for nature, for that is the true way to learn to understand art more and more.

Painters understand nature and love her and *teach us to see her.* And then there are painters who can only make good things, who cannot make anything bad, as there are also ordinary people who cannot do anything that doesn't turn out well.

I am doing very well here, I have a delightful home, and it is a great pleasure to me to study London and the English way of living and the English people themselves, and then I have nature and art and poetry, and if that is not enough, what is enough? Still I do not forget Holland and especially the Hague, and Brabant. In the office we are very busy just now, we are making up the

inventory, which, however, takes us only five days; so it is much easier for us than for you at the Hague.

I hope you have had as happy a Christmas as I had.

Well, boy, I wish you all happiness, and write to me soon. In this letter I wrote to you just what came into my mind, I hope it is not too confused. Adieu, my regards to everybody, especially at Aunt Fie's and Hanebeek's.

Vincent.

14

Dear Theo, London Feb. 20 1874.

Thanks for your letter. I don't want the book just now, but send it back when you have finished it at your leisure. I have not read the book of van Vloten, but I should like to see it. I have read another book on art by van Vloten, and did not quite agree with him, and it was very learned. Burger is more simple, and whatever he says is true. I am glad you have been in Amsterdam, will you thank uncle Cor when you see him for the pamphlet he sent me.

I am glad you feel so comfortable at Roos'; as I already let you know through Anna Carbentus, you are quite right about those priggish girls. I also agree with you about Bertha Hanebeek; watch your heart, lad.

Have you already seen Mr. Jacobson's collection, it is well worth while, he will certainly ask you to come and see it.

Give him my respectful regards and tell him I am doing quite well here and that I see many beautiful things.

I am all right, I am very busy. Thank Willem for his letter and greet everybody at Roos' and Iterson and everybody who may ask for me.

Best regards,

Vincent.

15

Dear Theo, London March 30 1874.

In a letter from home, I received a guilder from you for a pair of cuff-buttons. Many thanks, boy, but you ought not to have done that, you want your money more than I do.

Thanks for your letter of this morning. I was very glad to hear that Mauve is engaged to be married to Jet Carbentus. That is fine. . . . I was pleased to hear that you are doing so well.

I am glad you read that book by Burger, read about art as much as you can, especially the "Gazette des Beaux-Arts," etc.

You must try by all means to get a good knowledge of the pictures. That picture by Apol we now have here is good, but last year he painted the same subject and I thought it was better and brighter than this one. I am glad you go now and then to see Uncle Cor, he has pictures and prints which you can never see at the house in the Hague.

I, too, am very busy just now and am glad of it for that is what I want. à Dieu, boy, keep in good spirits. I wish you well. Greetings to Iterson.

Vincent.

16

Dear Theo, London April 13 1874.

Many happy returns of your birthday, "do well and do not look back, then you will succeed."

I was glad to receive your last letter. A few days ago I sent you a photograph, "Young Girl with a Sword," by Jacquet, as I thought you would like to have it.

The picture of van Gorkom's is not very dirty. (*Entre nous*, I have not seen it, but tell him I said it was not very dirty.) How are Mauve and Jet? Tell me something about them.

I am glad you often visit the Hanebeeks. When I come over to Holland I shall certainly spend a few days at the Hague, for the Hague is as a second home to me. (I will come and stay with you.)

How I should have liked to be with you on that walk to the Vink. I walk as much as I can, but I am very busy. It is very beautiful here (though it is in the city). In every garden the lilacs and hawthorn and laburnums are in bloom and the chestnut trees are beautiful.

If one really loves nature, one can find beauty everywhere. But still I sometimes long for Holland and especially for home.

I am very busy gardening and have sown a little garden full of

poppies, sweet peas and mignonette. Now we must wait to see what comes of it.

I enjoy the walks from home to the office and in the evening from the office home. It takes me about three-quarters of an hour.

It is a fine thing that business finishes so early, the office closes at six o'clock and yet there is not less work done. My compliments to all the friends, especially to Tersteeg, Hanebeek and Carbentus, also to everyone at Uncle Pompe's because they go to Kampen and to Mr. Bakhuyzen. Best wishes,

Vincent.

The apple trees have blossomed beautifully; I think everything is earlier here than in Holland.

As soon as I know anything more definite about my going home, I will write at once. I am afraid however that I shall not be able to go within four weeks at least. Write soon.

17

[1]Dear Theo, London June 16 1874.

Thanks for your letter. I intend to leave here Thursday the 25th, or Saturday the 27th of June, if nothing prevents. I am longing so much for everybody and for Holland. I long also to have a good talk with you about art, think it over and perhaps you will have some questions to put to me. We have many beautiful things here, among others a fine picture by Jacquet, and a beautiful Boldini.

In the Royal Academy there are beautiful things this year. Tissot has three pictures there. Of late I took up drawing again, but it did not amount to much.

I was glad to see from your letter that you often visit the Hanebeeks. à Dieu, we shall soon meet, my compliments to all the friends.

Ever your brother,

Vincent.

I am glad you like Caesar de Cock so much, he is one of the few painters who understand our dear Brabant intimately. I do not know if I told you that I met him last year in Paris.

[1] Before he went to Holland he declared his love to Ursula Loyer, but heard that she was already engaged to be married, so he came home in a melancholy mood.

18

Dear Theo, Helvoirt July 10 1874.

Thanks for the information. We now stay here another day and arrive in London Wednesday morning.[1] The photograph that I put in the catalogue of Forbes was for you as I thought it would interest you, it represented the Scheldt in Belgium. It is from a picture by Cap. It is not so very beautiful, but it is at least original. I will write soon from London.

Best wishes from

Vincent.

19

Dear Theo, London July 21 1874.

Yesterday a box was sent to the Hague, in which I enclosed a photograph after J. Maris and also as I promised, "Der Wirthin Tochterlein," I hope you will put them up both in your room. In the same box is a photograph after Thys Maris, for Mr. Tersteeg. Schüller in Paris sent me six copies of both, which I needed for giving away; from those after Thys Maris I have none to spare. Anna and I arrived safely in London and hope we shall find something for her here.

I do not say it will be easy, but every day she is here she learns something, and at all events I think there is more chance for her to find something here than in Holland. It is a great pleasure for me to walk with her through the city in the evening, I find everything again as beautiful as when I saw it the first time. Good luck to you, boy, and give my compliments to Roos, Hanebeeks and Carbentus when you see them. I am learning to swim.

Write to me if you have already read in Michelet[2] and what you think about it. To me that book was a revelation. Adieu.

Vincent.

20

Dear Theo, London July 31 1874.

I am glad you have read Michelet and that you understand him so well. Such a book teaches us that there is much more in Love than people generally suppose.

[1] His eldest sister went with him to London.
[2] "L'Amour" by Michelet.

That book has been a revelation to me as well as a Gospel at the same time, "no woman is old." (That does not mean that there are no old women, but that a woman is not old as long as she loves and is loved.) And then such a chapter as "The Aspirations of Autumn," how beautiful it is.

That a woman is quite a different being than a man, and a being that we do not yet know, at least only quite superficially, as you said, yes, I am sure of it. And that man and wife can be one, that is to say one whole and not two halves, yes, I believe that too.

A. keeps up well, we take beautiful walks together. It is so beautiful here if one has only an open and simple eye, without any beams in it. But if one has that it is beautiful everywhere.

That picture of Thys Maris which Mr. Tersteeg has bought must be beautiful, I have heard about it already and I myself have bought and sold one quite similar.

Since I am back in England my love for drawing has stopped, but perhaps I will take it up again some day or other. I am reading a great deal just now.

Probably we move on the 1st of January, 1875, to another larger house. Mr. Obach is in Paris just now to decide whether we shall take over that other business or not. Don't speak about it for the moment to anybody.

I hope you are all right and will write to us soon. A. begins to enjoy seeing pictures and sees them pretty well, she likes Boughton, Maris and Jaquet, so that is a beginning. *Entre nous*, I think it will be very difficult to find something for her, they say everywhere that she is too young, and generally German is required, but at all events, she has more chances here than in Holland. Adieu.

Vincent.

You can imagine how pleasant it is to be here together with A. Tell Mr. Tersteeg the picture arrived in good order and that I will write to him soon.

21

Dear Theo, London Aug. 10 1874.

"Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man."

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

So keep to your own ideas and if you doubt whether they are right, test them with those of Him who dared to say, "I am the Truth," or with those of some very human person, Michelet for instance. . . .

Virginity of soul and impurity of body can go together. You know the "Margaret at the Fountain," by Ary Scheffer, is there a purer being than that girl, "that loved so much"!

"Leys n'est pas un imitateur mais un semblable," is a true saying that struck me too. One might say the same of Tissot's pictures, of his "Walk in the Snow," "Walk on the Ramparts," "Marguerite in Church," etc.

From the money I gave you, you must buy Alphonse Karr's "Journey round My Garden." Be sure to do that, I want you to read it. Anna and I walk every evening, autumn is coming fast and that makes Nature more serious and more intimate still.

We are going to move and to live in a house quite covered with evergreen; from there I will soon write more. Compliments to everybody who may inquire for me.

Vincent.

22

Dear Theo, February 1875.

I have quite filled your little book[1] and I think it turned out well. Send me, when you have a chance, "La Falaise" by Jules Breton.

Our gallery is ready now and is very beautiful, we have some splendid pictures: Jules Dupré, Michel, Daubigny, Maris, Israëls, Mauve, Bisschop, etc.

In April we shall have an exhibition. Mr. Boussod has promised to send us the best things that are to be had, the "Malaria" by Herbert, "La Falaise" by Jules Breton, etc. How I should like to have you here, we must manage that some day. How I should love to show you my room.

There is a beautiful exhibition of old art here, among others, a large "Descent from the Cross" by Rembrandt, five large figures in twilight, you can imagine the sentiment. Five Ruysdaels, one Frans Hals, van Dyck, a landscape with figures by Rubens, "Autumn Evening" by Titian, two portraits by Tintoretto, and

[1] A little note-book in which Vincent copied for Theo the poems he liked best.

some beautiful old English art, Reynolds, Romney, and *old Crome*, landscape, splendid. Adieu, I will send you your little book at the first opportunity. Write to me soon.

Vincent.

23

Dear Theo, March 6th 1875.

Bravo, Theo. Your appreciation of that girl in "Adam Bede," is very good. That landscape—in which the fallow, sandy path runs over the hill to the village, with its clay or white-washed cottages, with mossgrown roofs, and here and there a black thorn-bush, on either side the brown heath, and a gloomy sky over it, with a narrow white streak at the horizon—it is from Michel.

But there is a still purer and nobler sentiment in it than in Michel. To-day I enclose in the box we send, the little book containing poetry I spoke of. Also "Jesus" by Renan and "Joan of Arc" by Michelet and also a portrait of Corot from the "London News," which hangs in my room too.

I do not think you will soon have a chance of being transferred to the house in London.

Don't regret that your life is too easy, mine is rather easy too; I think that life is pretty long and that the time will arrive soon enough in which another "shall gird thee and lead thee where thou wouldst not."

Adieu, remember me to all the friends. With a firm handshake,

Vincent.

24

London 25 Bedford Street, Strand

Dear Theo, April 6 1875.

Thanks for your letter. I copied in your little book "Meeres-stille" by Heine, didn't I? Some time ago I saw a picture by [1]Thys Maris that reminded me of it. An old Dutch town with rows of brownish red houses with stepped gables and high stoops, grey roofs and white or yellow doors, window-frames and cornices; canals with ships and a large white drawbridge under which a barge passes with a man at the rudder, the little house of the bridgekeeper, who is seen through the window, sitting alone in his little office.

[1] Matthew Maris.

Farther up a stone bridge across the canal over which some people pass, and a cart with white horses.

And there is life everywhere. A porter with his wheel-barrow, a man who is leaning against the railing of the bridge and looking into the water, a woman in black with a white bonnet.

The foreground, a brick paved quay with a black rail.

In the distance a church spire looms above the houses.

A greyish white sky over all.

The subject is almost the same as that of the big J. Maris, "Amsterdam," which you probably know, but this is talent and the other genius. I have copied a few things for you again which I will send when there is an opportunity.

Don't forget "La Falaise," and anything else you may happen to think of. That by Victor Hugo is splendid. Adieu, my love to father if you see him.

Vincent.

25

Dear Theo, London April 18 1875.

Enclosed I send you a little drawing. I made it last Sunday, the morning when the little daughter of my landlady died, she was thirteen years old. It is a view on Streatham Common, a large grassy plain with oak trees and gorse.

It had been raining over night and the ground was soaked and the young spring grass was fresh and green.

As you see it is sketched on the title-page of the "Poems," by Edmond Roche. There are some very fine ones among them, grave and sad, among others one that begins and finishes thus:

J'ai gravi triste et seul, la dune triste et nue,
Où la mer fait gémir sa plainte continue,
La dune où vient mourir la vague aux larges plis,
Monotone sentier aux tortueux replis.

and another, "Calais":

Que j'aime à te revoir, O ma ville natale,
Chère nymphe marine assise aux bords des eaux,
J'aime de ton beffroi la flèche qui s'élance,
Belle de hardiesse et belle d'élégance,
Et sa coupole à jour, qui laisse voir les cieux.

You will probably be curious to know the one that describes the etching of Corot and therefore I copy that also for you:

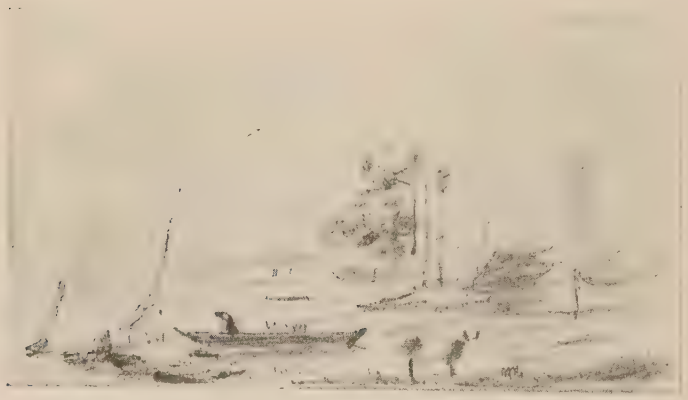
L'étang

à Corot.

Nous regardions l'étang d'une eau morne et plombée
Lentement sous la brise assembler pli sur pli,
Et la vase cerner d'un contour assoupli
La proue et les flancs noirs d'une barque embourbée;
La couronne des bois, feuille à feuille tombée,
Jonchait le sol; le ciel de brume était rempli;
Tous deux, à demi voix, comme à la dérobée,
Nous disions tristement: " L'été s'est accompli."
" Ces coteaux ont perdu leur grace coutumière,
" Plus de feuillage vert, plus de blonde lumière
" Tremblant dans l'eau qui tremble, ou dorant la hauteur."

Cette idylle à nos yeux peut encore reparaître,
Si vous le voulez bien; n'êtes vous pas le maître
Qui l'avez recréé après le créâteur?

Ville d'Avray.



Hearty greetings and good luck to you. Adieu.

Vincent.

Dear Theo, London May 8 1875.

Thanks for your last letter. How is the patient?[1] From father I already heard that she was ill, but I did not know that it was as bad as that, please write me soon about her.

Ay, lad, " What shall we say? " C.M. and Mr. Tersteeg have been here and left again last Saturday. In my opinion they have been too often to the Crystal Palace and other places with which they had nothing to do. I think they might just as well have come to see the place where I lived. I hope and trust that I am not what many people think me to be just now, we shall see, some time must pass; probably they will say the same of you a few years hence, at least if you remain what you are: my brother in every sense.

Farewell and my compliments to the patient.

With a handshake,

Vincent.

" Pour agir dans le monde il faut mourir à soi-même. Le peuple qui se fait le missionnaire d'une pensée religieuse n'a plus d'autre patrie que cette pensée.

L'homme n'est pas ici-b s seulement pour être heureux, il y est même pas pour être simplement honnête. Il y est pour réaliser de grandes choses pour la société, pour arriver à la noblesse et dépasser la vulgarité où se traîne l'existence de presque tous les individus."

Renan.

" To act well in this world one must give up all selfish aims. The people who become the missionary of a religious thought, have no other fatherland than this thought.

Man is not on this earth only to be happy, he is not only there to be simply honest, he is there to realize great things for humanity, to attain nobility and to surpass the vulgarity in which the existence of almost all individuals drags on."

Renan.

[1] Their cousin, Annette Hanebeek, who died soon after.

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Paris, le 31 Mai 18[illegible]

Waarde Theo,

Dank voor je brief van dezen morgen
Gisteren heb ik de tentoonstelling van Corot
gezien. Daar was o.a. een Schij. „Le jardin
des oliviers". Ik ben blij dat hij dat geschilderd
heeft.
Rechts, een groep olijfbomen, donker tegen de
schemerende blauwe lucht; op den achter-
grond heuvels met [strikeout]stukken een paar[/strikeout] lichte bomen bezweid,
waarboven de avondster.
Op de salon zijn 3 Corot's „zeer mooi, van
de mooiste, kort voor zijn dood geschilderd,
Les bucherones' zal waarschijnlijk eene
kortonee in l'Illustration of Le monde illustré
komen.
Zooals gij denken kunt heb ik ook de Louvre &
Luxembourg gezien
De Ruysdaels in de Louvre zijn prachtig
vooral de buisson, l'estacade & le coup de soleil

PARIS

May 1875–March 1876

About the middle of May, Vincent was sent to Paris, first for six or eight weeks, but in June it is decided that he will stay there until further notice. It is against his will; his letters home are melancholy, he no longer wants to be an art dealer, and at last his parents also begin to understand that it would perhaps be better for him to change his position, though he does not yet know what to choose instead.

In January, 1876, follows the episode of his dismissal from Goupil. (See letter 50.)

27

Dear Theo, Paris May 31 1875.

Thanks for your letter of this morning. Yesterday I saw the exhibition of Corot. There was among others, the picture, "The Garden of Olives," I am glad he has painted that.

To the right a group of olive trees, dark against the glimmering blue sky, on the background, hills covered with shrubs and a few large, ivy grown trees over which the evening star shines.

At the Salon there are three very fine Corots, the best of them painted shortly before his death, "Les Bûcheronnes," will probably be reproduced as a wood-cut in the "Illustration" or "Le Monde Illustré."

Of course I have also seen the Louvre and the Luxembourg.

The Ruysdaels at the Louvre are splendid, especially "Le Buisson," "L'Estacade," and "Le Coup de Soleil."

I wish you could see the little Rembrandts there, "The Pilgrims of Emmaus," and its counterpart, "The Philosophers."

Some time ago I saw Jules Breton with his wife and two daughters. His figure reminded me of J. Maris, but he has dark hair.

As soon as there is an opportunity I will send you a book of his, "Les Champs et la Mer." That contains all his poems. He has a beautiful picture at the Salon, "St. John's Eve." Peasant

girls who dance on a summer evening around a St. John's fire, in the background the village with a church and the moon over it,

Dansez, dansez, oh jeunes filles,
En chantant vos chansons d'amour,
Demain pour courir aux faucilles,
Vous sortirez au petit jour.

There are now three pictures of his at the Luxembourg: "A Procession among the Cornfields," "The Reaper Girls," and "Alone." à Dieu.

Vincent.

28

Dear Theo, Paris June 19 1875

I had hoped to see her before her death,[1] but it might not be. God leads us and we must follow.

In the first box that we send to Holland you will find a photograph after that picture of Ph. de Champaigne of which Michelet says, "it stayed in my memory for thirty years, coming back to me incessantly." Further, an etching by Daubigny after Ruysdael, "The Bush," a lithograph after Corot, "Sunset," a lithograph by Bodmer, "Fontainebleau in Autumn," and two etchings by Jacque. à Dieu.

Vincent.

I do not know how long I shall stay here, but before I go back to London I hope to go to Helvoirt, I hope you will be there also. I will pay for the journey.

I am sure you will not forget her or her death but keep it to yourself.

This is one of those things that make us as time goes on "sorrowful but always glad," that is what we have to learn.

[1] See letter 26.

29

Dear Theo, Paris June 29 1875.

I think it would be well for you to leave the Hague. I wonder if you want to go? Tell me yes or no. For the present I stay here and probably will not go back to Holland before the autumn. In the first box that goes to the Hague you will find a little parcel for Helvoirt. Please forward it after seeing what it contains. There are a few lithographs which I should like to see hanging in father's study, next to the "Burial in the Corn Fields," by Van der Maaten. The picture by Anker, "An Old Huguenot," the lithograph of which is in the parcel above mentioned, I have sold to Uncle Vincent, who was here a few days ago. He also bought a beautiful picture by Jacque—"Horses before a Plough in the Rain."

There has been a sale here of drawings by Millet, I do not know whether I have already written to you about it.

When I entered the hall of the Hotel Drouot, where they were exhibited, I felt like saying: "Take off your shoes for the place where you are standing is Holy Ground."

You know that Millet lived at Greville. Well I do not know whether it was at Greville or Granville that the man died, whom I told you of. However this may be, I looked with double attention at Millet's drawings of "The Rocks of Greville"; there is now a picture of his at the Luxembourg: "The Church at Greville." à Dieu.

Vincent.

30

Dear Theo, Paris July 6 1875.

Thanks for your letter, yes, boy, I thought so.

You must tell me how your English is. Have you studied it a little? If not, it does not make so much difference after all.

I have taken a little room on Montmartre which I am sure you would like. It is small but it overlooks a little garden full of ivy and wild vine.

I will tell you what engravings I have on the wall:

Ruysdael, The Bush.
" The Bleacheries.

Rembrandt,	Bible Lecture. (A large old-fashioned Dutch room at evening, a candle on the table, where a young mother is sitting reading the Bible, beside the cradle of her baby. An old woman is sitting listening, it is a thing that reminds you of, "Again, I say to you, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." It is an old copper engraving as large as "The Bush," splendid.)
Ph. de Champaigne,	Portrait of a Lady.
Corot,	Evening.
"	"
Bodmer,	Fontainebleau.
Bonington,	A Road.
Troyon,	The Morning.
Jules Dupré,	The Evening.
Maris,	A Woman Washing.
"	The Christening.
Millet,	The Hours of the Day. (Wood-cuts, four pages.)
V. d. Maaten,	Burial in the Corn Fields.
Daubigny,	The Dawn. (Crowing Cock.)
Charlet,	Hospitality. (Farm, surrounded by pine trees, in winter in the snow, a peasant and a soldier before the door.)
Ed. Frère,	The Seamstress.
"	The Barrel-Maker.

Well, boy, keep in good spirits, and you know, practise patience and kindness as far as possible. Let us always be good friends. à Dieu.

Vincent.

31

Dear Theo, Paris July 15 1875.

Uncle Vincent has been here again, I have been with him pretty often and talked things over. I asked him if there was any

chance of getting you here in Paris. At first he wouldn't hear of it and said it was much better for you to stay in the Hague. I insisted, however, and you may be sure he will keep it in mind. When he comes to the Hague he probably will talk about it to you ; be as calm as you can and let him say whatever he likes; it will do you no harm and probably you will want his help later on. You must not speak about me, if you can avoid it.

He is very, very clever. When I was here last winter he said to me among other things, " supernatural things I may not know, but of natural things I know everything." I do not know if those were the exact words, but that was the meaning.

I can also tell you that one of his favourite pictures is, " Lost Illusions," by Gleyre.

Sainte-Beuve said, " there exists in most men a poet who died young, whom the man survived." And Musset said, " know, that there is often hidden in us a dormant poet, always young and alive." I think Uncle Vincent belongs to the first group. So you know with whom you have to deal.

You can ask him straight out if he can have you transferred here or to London. I thank you for your letter of this morning and for the poem by Rückert. Do you possess his poems ? I should like to know him better. As soon as there is a chance I will send you a French Bible and the Imitation of Jesus Christ, that probably was the favourite book of the lady painted by Ph. de Champaigne; at the Louvre is a portrait of her daughter, a nun, also by Ph. de Ch.; she has the Imitation on the chair beside her.

Father wrote to me once, " You know that the same mouth that spoke, 'Be harmless as doves,' immediately added, 'and wise as serpents.'" Keep that in mind and remember me always,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Do you have in the gallery the photographs after Meissonier? Look at them often, he has painted *men*, probably you know his: " Le Fumeur à la Fenêtre " and " Le Jeune Homme Déjeunant."

Dear Theo, Paris July 24 1875.

A few days ago we received a picture by de Nittis, a view of London on a rainy day, Westminster Bridge and the House of Parliament. I used to pass Westminster Bridge every morning and every evening and know how it looks when the sun sets behind Westminster Abbey and the House of Parliament, and how it looks early in the morning, and in winter in snow and fog.

When I saw the picture I felt how much I loved London. Still I think that it is better for me that I left it.

This, in answer to your question.

I certainly do not believe that you will be sent to London.

Thanks for the "Springtime of Life." And "At Midnight" by Rückert. It is very beautiful, the latter reminds me of "September Night" by de Musset. I wish I could send it you, but I do not possess it.

Yesterday we sent a box to the Hague in which you will find what I promised you.

I hear that Anna and Liesbeth are at home, I should like to see them.

Be as happy as you can and write to me soon. With a firm handshake,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Dear Theo, Paris Aug. 13 1875.

I have wanted to write to you before. I am glad that father has accepted the nomination to Etten; under these circumstances I think it right that Willemien goes with Anna. I wish I could have been with you all at Helvoirt that Sunday; did I write to tell you I spent the day with Soek and his family at Ville d'Avray? I was surprised to find in a little church there three pictures by Corot. Last Sunday and Sunday fortnight I went to church to hear Mr. Bercier, and his text was, "All things work together for good to them that love God," and "He created man after His own image"; it was beautiful and grand. You too must go to church every Sunday, even if the sermon is not so good, it is better to go; you will not regret it. Have you been to church to hear the Rev. Zubli? On the list of engravings that hang in my room, I forgot the following:

N. Maes,	The Nativity.
Hamon,	"If I were the sombre Winter."
François,	Last Summer Days.
Ruyperez,	Imitation of Jesus Christ.
Bosboom,	Cantabimus and Psallamus.

I am trying to get another engraving of Rembrandt's "Bible Lecture" for you, if possible I will send it to you in the first box of pictures. Did I send you a lithograph of Troyon's "Morning Effects," and François' "Last Summer Days"? If not. Tell me. I have duplicate copies of them.

And now, be as happy as you can, do well and do not look back in so far as you can help it.

Believe me always your loving brother,

Vincent.

My compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Tersteeg and Mauve. Also to van Stockum's, Hanebeek's, Aunt Fie's and Roos'!

Dear Theo, [Undated.]

Thanks for your last letter and the poem by Rückert.

On Sunday I went again to hear Mr. Bercier; his text was, "Il ne vous est pas permis," and he finished with "Heureux ceux pour qui la vie a toutes ses épines."

The following are words of which I know Uncle Vincent is very fond: "Rejoice O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know then, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

Still I prefer:

"Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man," and "Thy will be done," and "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

Enclosed a note for Mr. Tersteeg. It is to ask him if he will have framed for me the two engravings, "Good Friday," and "St. Augustine," which you will find in the next box I send you. And will you be so kind as to have them sent to Helvoirt by the 10th of September.[1]

I should like it to be a present from us both, so will you pay 2.50 to help pay for the frames. I told Mr. Tersteeg that you would write me how much it costs and that I would then remit him the money; the 2.50 you can give me when we meet. That will probably be before Christmas, I think it would be better not to ask for leave before that time. To-night I am invited to dine at Mr. Hamman's.[2] à Dieu, write to me soon and believe me,

Your affectionate brother,

Vincent.

[1] Their mother's birthday.
[2] A French painter, friend of Uncle Vincent.

Dear Theo, Paris Sept. 2 1875.

This morning I received from father and from you the tidings of Uncle Jan's death.[1]

Such a thing makes us say: "Unite us, O Lord, close together and may the love of Thee strengthen that bond" and "Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."

In the first box of pictures that goes to Holland you will find some lithographs and the engraving after Rembrandt that I mentioned to you. The two lithographs after Bonington you will surely like. At the same time I send you a few photographs after Jules Breton and Corot for father; I will write on the back, "for Helvoirt."

I have not heard of the painter, Pynas, about whom you write. I am longing to see the picture you mention. That lithograph after Diaz, "A Monk," I do not know either.

Last Sunday I was at the Louvre (on Sundays I generally go there or to the Luxembourg). I wish you could see van Ostade, his own family, himself, his wife and, I think, eightchildren, all in black, the wife and daughters with white caps and kerchiefs, in a stately old Dutch room with a fireplace, large oak panels and ceiling, and whitewashed walls with pictures in black frames. In the corner of the room is a large bed with blue curtains and quilt.

The Rembrandt, "The Emmaus Pilgrims," about which I wrote you has been engraved; Messrs. Goupil & Co., will publish the engraving next autumn. Do you sometimes visit Borchers at his home? his mother is, I think a very respectable woman. Go out as much as you can, I mean, of course, to van Stockum, Hanebeek, Carbentus, Borchers, etc., not to Kraft or Marda, you know, unless it may be that you cannot do otherwise, then there is no harm in it for once. How is business? I know how difficult it is sometimes, but try to be as useful as you can.

Best wishes and write to me soon, always your loving brother,

Vincent.

Enclosed a note for Borchers, compliments to all the Roos family and to everybody who asks for me. B. tells me that Weehuizen is dead, I did not know it. Were you there?

[1] Uncle Jan Carbentus.

36

Dear Theo, Paris Sept. 4 1875.

Enclosed I send you my letter for mother's birthday, please enclose it in yours. I have bought the book about Michel, with etchings from his pictures; as soon as I have finished it I will send it to you.

Yet Michel is not so beautiful, by far, as that landscape described in "Adam Bede," that impressed us both so much. There is a painting by Bonington also which is almost it, but *not quite*. When you have finished the book, please lend it, in my name, to Uncle Cor, when you have a chance, but I want it to be yours. I will see the pictures themselves, so you may have the descriptions and etchings from them. Compliments to Hanebeeks, Carbentus, van Stockums, Mauve, and Roos when you see them.

Best wishes, always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Give the book by Michel also to Mr. Tersteeg to read.

37

Dear Theo, Paris Sept. 12 1875.

"Flügel, Flügel über's Leben!
Flügel über Grab und Tod!"

that is what we want and I begin to understand that we can get them. Don't you think father has them? And you know how he got them, by prayer and the fruit thereof—patience and faith, and from the Bible, that was a light unto his path and a lamp unto his feet.

I heard this afternoon a beautiful sermon about: "Forget those things which are behind you." It said among other things "Have more hope than memories, whatever has been valuable and blessed in your past is not lost, you will meet it again on your path, so don't think about it any more, but go forward.—All things have become new in Jesus Christ."

Keep heart and believe me,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

If it is true that boyhood and youth are but vanity (always keeping in mind what is written here above, and remembering that though we have to begin anew later on, a well-spent youth is a treasure), must it not then be our ambition to become men like our father and others? Let us hope and pray for that. Compliments to all who may ask for me.

You know the etching by Rembrandt, "Burgomaster Six," standing reading before the window? I know that Uncle Vincent and Uncle Cor are very fond of it, and I sometimes think they must have resembled him when they were younger. You know also the portrait of Six when he was older. I think there is an engraving of it in the gallery at the Hague. His life must have been a beautiful and serious one.

38

Dear Theo, Paris Sept. 17 1875.

A feeling, even a keen one for the beauties of Nature is not the same as a religious feeling, though I think these two stand in close relation to one another.

Almost everybody has a feeling for nature, one more, the other less, but there are few who feel God is a spirit and whoever worships Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Our parents belong to those few; I think Uncle Vincent too.

You know that there is written: "This world passes and all its magnificence." And that there is on the contrary also mentioned "a good part that shall not be taken from us," and, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Let us also pray that we become rich in God ; but do not think too deeply about these things, gradually they will become clearer to you, and do as I suggested. Let us ask that our part in life should be to become the poor in the kingdom of God, God's servants. We are still far from it ; let us pray that our eye may become single and then our whole body shall be full of light.

Compliments to Roos and to anybody who asks for me.

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

It is the same with the feeling for Art. Don't give yourself utterly to that. Keep by all means love for your work and respect for Mr. Tersteeg. Later on you will see better than now how much he deserves it.

However you need not exaggerate this.

Is your appetite good? Eat especially as much bread as you like. Good night, I must give my boots a shine for to-morrow.

39

Dear Theo, Paris Sept. 25 1875.

The path is narrow, therefore we must be careful. You know how others have arrived where we want to go, let us take that simple road too.

Ora et labora, let us do our daily work, whatever the hand finds to do, with all our strength and let us believe that God will give good gifts, a part either that will not be taken away, to those who ask Him for it.

"If then anybody is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old things are past away, behold all things are become new!" (2 Cor. v. 18.)

I am going to destroy all my books by Michelet, etc. I wish you would do the same.

How I am longing for Christmas, but let us have patience, it will come soon enough.

Courage, lad, my compliments to all the friends, and believe me,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

As soon as possible I will send the money for the frames. When I write to Mr. Tersteeg, I will tell him that for the moment I am rather short of cash, as I asked our cashier to hold back every month a part of my salary as I shall want a lot of money around Christmas for my journey, etc., however I hope to send it ere long.

40

Dear Theo, Paris Sept. 30 1875.

With this letter I send you the book by Michel that I promised

you, also an etching of the "Marguerite," by Scheffer and a lithograph after Corot and a package of chocolate.

I know quite well that your life is not easy just now, boy, but stay firm and keep up your courage; it is sometimes necessary "not to dream and not to sigh."

You know, "that thou art not alone but thy father is with thee."

With a firm handshake,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Please keep the etching after Rembrandt that goes with this letter, and the photographs after Corot, and Jules Breton which I sent before, till father and mother are well settled at Etten, and then send them, that will be about the end of November.

41

Dear Theo, Paris Oct. 6 1875.

Though I wrote to you a short time ago, I am writing you again, for I know there are sometimes hard, barren stretches in our path. Keep courage, lad, sunshine follows after rain; keep hoping for that.

Rain and sunshine alternate, "on the road that goes uphill all the way, yes to the very end." From time to time we take a rest on "the journey that takes the whole day long, from morn till night."

Always recall to your mind the words, "This also will pass away."

"On a ses beaux jours," Jules Dupré used to say; let us also believe that.

To-day I had the chance of sending a parcel to the sisters in England. I sent them, among other things, the "Imitation of Jesus Christ," and some separate fragments from the Bible, in the same edition in which I sent you the Psalms.

Read in it often. Would you like to have the four Gospels and some of the Epistles separately?

I sholud like to have the Dutch hymns. Will you seek an occasion to send me the cheapest edition you can find. The

Psalms I have. Among the English hymns there are some very beautiful ones, for instance:

Thy way not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be
Lead me by Thine own hand
Choose out the path for me.

I dare not choose my lot,
I would not if I might,
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.

The kingdom that I seek,
Is Thine, so let the way
That leads to it be Thine,
Else I must surely stray.

Choose Thou for me my friend,
My sickness or my health;
Choose Thou my cares for me,
My poverty, my wealth.

Not mine, not mine the choice,
In things or great or small
Be Thou my guide, my strength
My wisdom and my all.

and the following:

Nearer my God to Thee
Nearer to Thee
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be
Nearer my God to Thee
Nearer to Thee.

and also:

Oft in sorrow . . . oft in woe
Onward Christians, onward go,
Fight the fight, maintain the strife
Strengthened with the bread of life.

Let your drooping heart be glad;
March in heavenly armour clad,
Fight nor think the battle long,
Soon shall vict'ry tune your song.

Let not sorrow dim your eye,
Soon shall ev'ry tear be dry,
Let not fear your course impede,
Great your strength if great your need!

Best regards to all the friends. How is Caroline van Stockum? Give her my kindest regards and believe me your loving brother,

Vincent.

Does the road wind uphill all the way?
Yes to the very end.
Will the journey take the whole long day?
From morn till night, my friend.[1]

42

Dear Theo, Paris Oct. 11 1875.

Thanks for your letter of this morning. This time I will write you as I seldom do; that is, I will tell you more in detail how I spend my time.

As you know I live on Montmartre. In the same house lives a young Englishman, employee of the house, eighteen years old, son of an art dealer in London, who probably will enter his father's business later on. He had never been from home before, and, especially the first week that he was here, he was very uncouth; for instance, he ate every morning, afternoon, and evening, four or six pieces of bread (bread is very cheap here), adding in addition several pounds of apples and pears, etc. He is notwithstanding that as thin as a stick, with two rows of strong teeth, full red lips, glittering eyes, a pair of large, generally red, projecting ears, close cropped head, black hair, etc., etc. I can assure you quite a different being than the "Lady" by Ph. de Champaigne.—At first everybody laughed at him, even I. Later on I grew to like him, and now I assure you I am very glad to have his company in the evening.

[1] Christina Rossetti. Wrongly quoted by Vincent in the original.

He has quite a naïve and unspoiled heart and is very good at his work. Every evening we go home together, eat something in my room and the rest of the evening I read aloud, generally from the Bible. We intend to read it through. In the morning, usually between five and six, he comes to wake me; we breakfast in my room and about eight o'clock we go to the office. Lately he is less greedy at his meals and has begun to collect prints, in which I help him. Yesterday we went together to the Luxembourg and I showed him the pictures I liked best, and indeed the simple minded know many things that the wise ignore.

Breton	Alone, Benediction of the Harvest, Recall of the Reaper-Girls.
Brion	The Pilgrims of St. Odille, Noah.
Bernier	Fields in Winter.
Cabat	Pond and Autumn Evening.
Emile Breton	Winter Evening.
Bodmer	Fontainebleau.
Millet	Church of Gréville.
Daubigny	Spring and Autumn.
François	The End of Winter, The Churchyard.
Gleyre	Lost Illusions.
Hébert	Christ in The Garden of Olives and Malaria.
Rosa Bonheur	Ploughing, etc.

Also the picture of (I cannot remember the name) a convent where the monks receive a stranger and suddenly perceive that it is Jesus. On the wall of the convent is written, "Man proposes and God disposes," "Whoever receives you receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

At the office I do whatever I find to do; that is our task all through life, boy. I hope I may always do it with all my strength.

Have you done what I suggested and destroyed your books of Michelet, Renan, etc.? I think that will give you rest. I am sure you will never forget that page of Michelet about the "Portrait of a Lady" by Ph. de Champaigne, and do not forget Renan either, but still destroy them. "If thou hast found honey look to it that thou eatest not too much of it, that it may not become loath-

some," is written in the Proverbs, or something like it. Do you know Erckmann-Chatrian: the "Conscript," "Waterloo," and especially "Friend Fritz" and also "Madame Theresa"? You must read them when you can get them. Change of food gives an appetite (but we must especially take care to have *plain* food, for it is written "give us this day our daily bread"), and the bow cannot always be strung. I hope you will pardon me for telling you these things. I know you are intelligent enough to find them out for yourself. Do not be too easily contented, and learn to distinguish for yourself between what is relatively good and evil and let that feeling show you the way under God's guidance, for, boy, we need it so much, "God's guidance." Write again soon and a little more in detail. My compliments to everybody, especially to Mr. Tersteeg and family, and be as happy as you can.

à Dieu, believe me always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

43

Dear Theo, Paris Oct. 14 1875.

I send you again a few words to cheer myself as well as you. I advised you to destroy your books, and do so now; yes, do so, it will give you rest; but while you do it, take care not to become narrow-minded and afraid of reading what is well written; on the contrary doing that is a *comfort* in life. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Look for light and freedom and *do not ponder too deeply over the evil in life.*

How I should like to have you here and show you the Luxembourg and the Louvre; but I think you too will come here after a while. Father wrote to me once, "Do not forget the story of Icarus, who wanted to fly to the sun and arrived at a certain height, lost his wings and dropped into the sea." You will often feel that neither you nor I are what we hope to become some day and that we are still far beneath father and other people; that we are wanting

in solidity, simplicity and sincerity; one cannot become simple and true in one day. But let us persevere, *above all let us have patience ; those who believe hasten not ;* still there is a difference between our longing to become real Christians and that of Icarus to fly to the sun. I think there is no harm in having a relatively strong body, take care to feed yourself well, and if sometimes you are very hungry, or rather have an appetite, eat well then. I assure you that I often do the same, and certainly used to do so. Especially bread, boy, " Bread is the staff of life," is a proverb of the English (though they are very fond of meat too, and in general take too much of it). And now write to me soon and also about things of everyday life.

Keep good courage and give my compliments to everybody who asks for me; within a month or two I hope we shall see each other.

With a firm handshake, I am always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

44

Dear Theo, Paris Nov. 9 1875.

It is again time for you to hear from me, but it will only be a short note to-day, for I have not much time as I am very busy.

Thanks for what you sent me; I am very glad to have it.

I am glad for our parents' sake as well as for yours that you were at Etten on the day of the ordination. You must tell me all about it.

Uncle Vincent and Aunt left again yesterday. I saw rather much of them. To my great regret I did not see them at the station when they left; enclosed is a note for uncle to tell him how it happened.

Autumn has come. I think you will take many walks, do you get up early in the morning? I do so regularly, it is a great thing to get used to it, that early hour of dawn is precious, and has become very dear to me. Usually I go to bed very early in the evening. Every morning my dear Englishman prepares oatmeal, how I wish you were here some morning.

I will soon write more. Write again soon and about everything. With a firm handshake, I am always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

45

Dear Theo, Paris Nov. 15 1875.

Enclosed is a note for uncle Hanebeek; I had not written since the death of Annette and felt a great longing to do so.

Do you visit them now and then? At all events you will take this note yourself, won't you?

My dear Englishman prepares oatmeal every morning, of which his father sent him twenty-five pounds. How I wish you could taste it with us. I am so glad that I met this boy. I have learned from him and in return have been able to show him a danger that threatened him.

He had never been away from home, and though he did not show it, he had a sickly (though noble) longing for his father and his home.

He longed for them with a longing that belongs only to God and to Heaven. Idolatry is not love. He who loves his parents must follow their footsteps in life. He understands this now clearly, and with sadness in his heart, he yet has courage and eagerness to go forward.

Has father already told you, as he often did me, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life," then let us do so, and with God's help we will succeed.

Good luck to you, believe me always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

46

Dear Theo, Paris Dec. 4 1875.

A few words in a hurry, because to-morrow is St. Nicholas day. It is such a pleasant day in Holland, I should like to celebrate it once more.

I am longing for Christmas, aren't you? We shall have a great many things to talk about. It is a pity that Anna cannot come too; I hope she will also have pleasant days. Christmas in England is very interesting, and perhaps Anna will learn to love her surroundings better if she celebrates the holiday there and helps to make things pleasant in the house. My dear Englishman (Gladwell is his name) is also going home for a few days; you can

imagine how he longs to go; he has never been away from home before.

Write to me soon.

Is it as cold in Holland as it is here? Gladwell and I are very comfortable in the morning and in the evening with our little stove.

I have taken to smoking a pipe again and I enjoy it as of old. Compliments to everybody who may ask for me.

A hearty handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

47

Dear Theo, Paris Dec. 9 1875.

This morning I heard from home what happened to you[1], and I want to write to you at once. I wish I could do something for you; one of these days a box will be sent to the Hague, I will put some chocolate in it for you. Gladwell calls that "consolation." I will also send you the book by Jules Breton, at least if I can get it back, as I lent it to somebody. I am longing to know how you are; write to me soon and please tell me some details about how you spend your days.

How I should like to be with you, Theo, but what can we do; it cannot be helped boy. In a fortnight I shall go home and then we will certainly see each other, and our meeting again will not be the less delightful for the accident that has happened to you.

If you see Uncle Jan greet him for me please, and thank him for his letter. You must try to become good friends with him. I know him but little but I know he is "spun gold."

It has been very cold, happily the thaw set in yesterday. I was very glad of it.

I am rather busy these days with the inventory and finishing up things before my departure.

And now, Theo, a hearty handshake and wishing you a speedy recovery, always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

[1] The streets being slippery, Theo had fallen and seriously hurt his foot.

48

Dear Theo, Paris Dec. 10 1875.

Herewith I send you what I promised. I am sure you will like the book of Jules Breton. One of his poems struck me particularly, it is called "Illusions." Happy those whose hearts are so tuned. "All things work together for them that love God," is a beautiful saying. So it will be with you, and the after-taste of these difficult days will be well.

But write to me soon how you feel, and tell me when the doctor says you will be well again, at least if you have not done so already.

Two weeks from to-day I hope to be in Etten. You can imagine how I long for it. Have I told you already that I have taken to smoking a pipe again? I refound in my pipe an old faithful friend, and now I suppose we shall never part again.

Uncle Vincent told me that you smoke too.

Give my very best love to the family Roos; both of us have enjoyed many good things in their house and they have proved faithful friends. We have for the moment here Emile Breton's picture, "Sunday Morning." You know it don't you? It is a village street of cottages and barns and at the end the church, surrounded by poplars. Everything is covered with snow, and there are little black figures that go to church. It tells us that winter is cold but that human hearts are warm.

Best wishes, boy, and believe me always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

The packages of chocolate marked X are for you, the others are for Mrs. Roos. Smoke the cigarettes with the rest of the family.

à Dieu.

49

Dear Theo, Paris Dec. 13 1875.

I was looking forward to your letter of this morning, and am very glad that you are recovering. Your parcel was only sent to-day, the little book of Jules Breton is in it. I am longing for Christmas and longing to see you, lad, but it will happen soon enough now.

I think I shall leave here Sunday week in the evening. Try your best to get as long a holiday as possible. And now there is another thing, I hope you will pardon my mentioning it. You have, like myself, enjoyed the poems of Heine and Uhland, but, boy, take care, it is rather dangerous stuff, an illusion that does not last long; do not give yourself up to it.

Don't you think it would be best to put away those little books I copied for you? Later on these books by Heine and Uhland will come into your hands again and then you will read them with other feelings and a more quiet heart.

Erckmann-Chatrian I like very much, as you know. Have you read "Friend Fritz"?

To come back once more to Heine.

Take the portraits of our father and mother and take the "Farewell" of Brion and then read Heine with those three before you, then you will understand what I mean. But, boy, do not think that I want to lecture you or give you a lesson. I know that there is in your heart what there is in mine, therefore I like to talk seriously with you now and then. Just make that experiment at all events.

I hope you will soon be well again and will write to me soon. How is Willem Valkis? My regards to him and to all the family and all who know me, also to van Iterson.

We have just now a beautiful picture by Schreyer, a wagon with horses in an autumn landscape, with setting sun. Also a beautiful Jacque, a melancholy landscape with sheep. How do you like the small Jacque "Ploughing" that has been in the Hague for some time? Very best wishes and speedy recovery. Always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

50

Dear Theo, Paris Jan. 10 1876.

Since we saw each other, I have not written to you; something happened to me during that time that did not come quite unexpectedly. When I saw Mr. Boussod again, I asked him if he approved of my being employed at the house for another year, and

said that I hoped he had no serious complaints against me. But the latter was indeed the case, and in the end he forced me, as it were, to say that I would leave the first of April, thanking the gentlemen for all that I might have learned in their house.

When the apple is ripe a soft breeze makes it fall from the tree, so it is here; I have done things that have been very wrong in one way and therefore I have but little to say.

And now, boy, it is not yet clear to me what I must do, but we will try to keep hope and courage. Be so kind as to show this note to Mr. Tersteeg, he may know it; but for the rest, I think it is best not to speak to anybody about it and to act as if nothing has happened. Write to me soon and believe me,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

51

Dear Theo, Paris Jan. 1876.

In the first box that goes to the Hague you will find a few parcels, will you be so kind as to deliver them.

First there is one for yourself in which is "Felix Holt." When you have read it send it please to Etten, and when they have finished it, please have them return it here, for it does not belong to me. It is a book that impressed me very much and I am sure it will be the same with you. There is also a parcel for Mr. Tersteeg and one for his wife, and also one for Mauve and his wife. To Mauve I wrote that he must ask you some day for that book on Michel, show it to him please when opportunity serves. There is also a parcel for father. Try to send it to Etten in time for his birthday; you might add perhaps "Felix Holt," and you can read it after it has been to Etten, that will perhaps be the best. In the little roll addressed to you, you will find three etchings after Jules Dupré, one for Uncle Jan van Gogh with my kindest regards and one for father. Then there is for father also a lithograph after Bodmer and an etching by Jacque, then another lithograph, after Cabat, for yourself.

Cabat resembles Ruysdael. There are two beautiful pictures of his at the Luxembourg, one is a pond with trees around it in autumn at sunset, and the other is the evening of a grey autumn

day, a road along a waterside and a few large oak trees. The etching after Jules Dupré is beautiful. It is one from an album of six with Dupré's portrait in it. He has such a simple and noble face, it reminds me somehow of Mauve, but he is older and perhaps in reality looks quite different from Mauve.

You are right in taking English lessons, you will not be sorry for it. I should like to send you a Longfellow and Andersen's "Fairy Tales." I shall try to get them; if I send them read especially Longfellow's "Evangeline," "Miles Standish," "King Robert of Sicily," etc.

And now it is again time to say good-bye, with a firm handshake. Regards to Roos, and to anybody who asks for me and believe me always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Give also my compliments to friend Borchers.

52

Dear Theo, Paris 1876.

Thanks for your letter, write to me often for I long to hear from you in these days. Write at length and about familiar things; you see that I am doing the same. What you told me about Boks was very interesting, how he had arranged his studio, and that you go there often—keep me well informed about those things.

We feel lonely now and then and long for friends and think we should be quite different and happier if we found a friend of whom we might say, "*he is the one.*" But you too will begin to learn that there is much self-deceit behind this longing, which if we yielded too much to it, would lead us from the road.

There is a word that haunts me these days, it is to-day's text, "His children shall seek to please the poor."

And now there is some news, my friend Gladwell is going to move; one of the employees of the printing office has persuaded Gladwell to come and live with him; he has tried this previously.

Gladwell has decided to move without thinking much about it. I am very sorry he is going, it will probably be soon, toward the end of the month. We have these last days a mouse in our "cabin," you know that is the name of our room. Every evening we put down some bread and the mouse already knows quite well where to find it.

I am reading the advertisements in the English papers and have already answered some. Let us hope for success.

Kind regards to Roos and others if they ask for me and write to me soon. Adieu. If Mr. Tersteeg should mention me to you, then tell me so; give him my kindest regards whenever I write to you. Always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

53

Dear Theo, Paris Feb. 2 1876.

Will you do me a favour? You know that edition of Andersen's "Stories of The Moon," translated by Dr. ten Kate which costs fifteen cents. Could you send me a copy when you have an opportunity?

The box for the Hague in which I shall enclose the parcels I mentioned, will only leave to-morrow. The one for father will not reach Etten in time but send it as soon as you can.

Till now I have had no replies to several letters I have written in answer to advertisements, neither have I had any answer from Uncle Vincent. I wrote to Mr. Obach asking if he would give references if required, and he answered me in a very kind note. Well, boy, what can I do but continue on my way quietly, looking to Him, of whom we think when saying, "Who will show us the right path?"

à Dieu, kind regards to our friends, always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

54

Dear Theo, Paris Feb. 7 1876.

Congratulations to you on father's birthday. It is a beautiful text, that of the 8th of February, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

What will be sent for our father and for us we know not, but we can leave that to Him whose name is "Our Father."

To-day I got a letter in answer to one of mine. They asked if I could teach French, German and drawing and also asked for my photograph, I answered to-day; as soon as I again hear from them I will let you know.

Thanks for the little book of Andersen, I am glad to have it. It is to read aloud to a Dutchman, one of the employees whom I have seen much of lately.

Yesterday I went to an English church here, it was a pleasant sensation to assist once more at the English service, it is so simple and beautiful. The text of the sermon was, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Many thanks again for the book of Andersen, a handshake and compliments to Roos. From home I heard that Mr. Tersteeg has been at Etten, Ever yours, in haste,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

55

Dear Theo, Paris Febr. 19 1876.

Thanks for your last letter and also for the catalogue sent in the last box.

Have I thanked you already for Andersen's tales, if not I do so now. From home I have heard that this Spring you will have to travel on business, you will not be sorry for that I suppose, it is a good exercise and you will see many beautiful things in your travels.

In the next box you will find Longfellow. Yesterday evening Gladwell was with me, he comes every Friday and we read poetry together.

I have not read "Hyperion" yet, but I have heard that it is very beautiful, I have just read a very beautiful book by Eliot,

three tales, "Scenes from Clerical Life," especially the last story, "Janet's Repentance," struck me very much. It is the life of a clergyman who lives chiefly among the inhabitants of the dirty streets of a town, his study looks out on the gardens with litter, etc., and on the red roofs and smoking chimneys of poor tenements. For his dinner he usually had nothing but underdone mutton and watery potatoes. He died at the age of thirty-four and during his long illness he was nursed by a woman who was a drunkard, but by his teaching, and leaning as it were on him, she had conquered her weakness and found rest for her soul. At his burial they read the chapter which says, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in Me though he were dead yet shall he live." And now it is again Saturday evening, for the days pass so quickly and the time for my departure will soon be here. No answer as yet from Scarborough. Kind greetings and a handshake, always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

56

Dear Theo, Paris March 15 1876.

Thanks for your last letter, please thank Mauve and his wife also for theirs, which I enjoyed very much.

I am longing to see the two pictures by Mauve that are destined for the Salon.

Perhaps Gladwell will come back to his old room, he is to have my place at the gallery.

Have you storms at the Hague as we have here? Do you know that if nothing happens to prevent it, I will go first to Etten? I hope to leave here the 31st of March or the first of April. I hear from home that on your travels you intend to visit Etten, when do you leave?

I hope to have the opportunity of sending you Longfellow before you leave, perhaps it will be a good book to take with you.

My time here is drawing to a close, there are not quite three weeks left, now and then I have to remind myself "be patient and meek."

Aunt Cornelie gave me a beautiful book to read, "Kenelm

Chillingly," by Bulwer, it is a fine book. It is the adventures of the son of a rich Englishman who can find no rest or peace in his own sphere and tries to find them among the lower classes. Yet the end is that he returns to his own class but is not sorry for his experiences. And now adieu, a pleasant journey (enjoy yourself and see many beautiful things), if the day of your leaving is before my next letter. Always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

57

Dear Theo, Paris March 23 1876.

At last I am sending Longfellow's poems, I am sure it will become a friend to you.

To-day I again answered two advertisements, I continue to do so, though I get hardly any answers, my time here is drawing to a close.

You will see many beautiful things on your travels; though the love of Nature is not *everything*, still it is a precious possession, may we keep it always.

And now you will become the guest in " many an Inn," that is pleasant too sometimes. You know I once made a trip on foot to Brighton, I always remember it with pleasure. The inns in England are often so cosy. Longfellow describes it so well in " Tales of the Wayside Inn."

Gladwell has got my place at the gallery and is there already to become familiar with his work before I leave. I have seen several pictures destined for the Salon, among others two beautiful large Gabriels, " A Morning in the Meadows," through the haze one sees in the distance a town, the other was what we should call a watery sun.

Also two large Xavier de Cocks, one an evening in the beginning of summer, a meadow surrounded by poplars, in the distance the farm and fields and a girl that drives the cows home. On the foreground a pool, around which three cows are lying in the grass, a white, a black and a red one; the sun has set and the trees stand out dark against the light yellowish sky.

I am writing in great haste, as you may see from the handwriting. A pleasant journey; always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

58

Dear Theo, Paris March 28 1876.

One word more, probably the last I shall write from Paris. I leave here Friday night and I shall be home Saturday morning at the same time as at Christmas.

Yesterday I saw six pictures by Michel, how I wish you could have seen them too; hollow paths through the sandy fields that lead to a mill, or a man that went home across the heath with grey skys over it, so simple and so beautiful. I think the "Emmaus Pilgrims" saw nature in the same way as Michel and it always reminds me of them when I see one of his pictures.

At the same time I saw a picture by Jules Dupré, a very large one. As far as one could see there was a black marshy soil, on the second plan a river and in the foreground a pool with three horses, in both is reflected a bank of white and grey clouds behind which the sun has set, at the horizon some grey-red and purple, the sky a soft blue.

It was at Durand Ruel's that I saw those pictures; more than twenty-five etchings after Millet and the same number after Michel and a great number after Dupré and Corot and all the other artists are to be had there at 1 fr. a piece; it was tempting. I could not resist the Millet's and bought the three last that were to be had from the Angelus, of course my brother will get one of them at the first opportunity.

Write again soon, kind regards to Roos, and Mr. and Mrs. Tersteeg and all who may ask for me. A handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

59

Dear Theo, Etten April 4 1876.

On the morning before I left Paris, I got a letter from a schoolmaster at Ramsgate who proposes that I should go there for a

month (without salary) and at the end of that time he will decide whether I am fit for the position.

You can imagine I am glad to have found something. At all events I have board and lodging free.

Yesterday I went with father to Brussels; we found Uncle Hein in a very sad state. In the train father and I spoke much about pictures, among others about the pictures by Rembrandt at the Louvre and the portrait of the " Burgomaster Six," and particularly about Michel.

Wouldn't there be a chance for father to see that book about Michel? think of it.

I am so glad I shall see you before I leave, and Lisbeth also.

Ramsgate is as you know a seaside resort, I read in a book that there are 12,000 inhabitants, that is all I know about it.

And now till Saturday, a good journey to you. Always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Gladwell saw me off at the station last Friday night ; on my birthday he came at half-past six in the morning and brought me a beautiful etching after Chauvel, an autumn landscape with a herd of sheep on a sandy road.

ENGLAND

April 1876–December 1876

Ramsgate and Isleworth

Now that Vincent has broken for ever with his career as an art dealer—which has proved a greater shock to him than he shows now,—there follows a long and difficult time of experiments. It seems afterwards that the idea of becoming a painter has occurred to him even then (see letter 341). Theo also seems to have mentioned it, but Vincent is too much taken up with religious fanaticism and thinks he will be most useful as a teacher, especially as a Bible teacher. With the force of despair, he clings to religion as his sole support and his letters prove clearly the almost morbid sensitiveness of that time.

The school of Mr. Stokes at Ramsgate, where he comes in April, is moved in June to Isleworth and in the vacation during that removal he spends a few days in London and visits his sister at Welwyn. As Mr. Stokes cannot or will not give him any salary, he leaves on the 1st of July for the school of Mr. Jones, a Methodist clergyman to whom Vincent serves as a kind of curate.

When he comes home next Christmas, it is decided that he will not go back to England as there are no prospects whatever for the future.

60

Dear father and mother, Ramsgate April 17 1876.

You have probably received my telegram, but you will be longing to hear some more particulars. In the train I wrote down a few things and send them to you, then you will know all about my journey.

Friday.

In thought we will stay together to-day. What do you think is better . . . the joy of meeting or the sorrow of parting? We have often parted already, this time there was more sorrow in it than there used to be, but also more courage, because of the firmer hope, the stronger desire for God's blessing. And was not Nature feeling with us, everything looked so grey and dull a few hours ago.

Now I am looking across the far stretching meadows and everything is so quiet and the sun disappears again behind the grey clouds but sheds a golden light over the fields.

These first hours after our parting, which you spend in church

and I at the station and in the train, how we are longing for each other and how we think of the others, of Theo and Anna and the other little sisters and the brother. Just now we passed Zevenbergen and I thought of the day you brought me there,[1] and I was standing on the steps at Mr. Provily's and looked after your carriage on the wet road, and then that evening when my father came to visit me for the first time. And that first homecoming at Christmas!

Saturday and Sunday.

On the steamer I thought so often of Anna, everything reminded me of our journey together.

The weather was clear and especially on the river it was beautiful, and also the view of the dunes dazzling white in the sun as viewed from the sea. The last thing I saw of Holland was a little grey church spire. I stayed on deck until sunset, but then it became too cold and rough.

Next morning in the train from Harwich to London it was beautiful to see at dawn the black fields and green meadows with sheep and lambs and here and there a thorn bush and a few large oak trees with dark twigs and grey moss-grown trunks. The glimmering blue sky with still a few stars, and a bank of grey clouds at the horizon. Before sunrise I already heard the lark. When we were near the last station before London, the sun rose. The bank of grey clouds had disappeared and there was the sun, as simple and grand as ever I saw it, a real Easter sun. The grass sparkled with dew and night frost. But still I like better that grey hour when we parted.—Saturday afternoon I stayed on deck till the sun had set. As far as one could see the water was fairly dark blue with rather high white-crested waves. The coast had already disappeared from sight.

The sky was one vast light blue without a single little cloud.

And the sunset cast a ray of glittering light on the water.

It was indeed a grand and majestic sight, but still the simpler, more quiet things touch one so much more deeply.

Arrived in London the train started for Ramsgate two hours later. That is still about four and a half hours by train. It is a beautiful road, for instance we passed one part that was quite

hilly. At the foot the hills are covered with scanty grass and at the top with oak woods. That reminded me of our dunes. Between the hills was a village with a grey church overgrown with ivy like most of the houses. The orchards were in full bloom and the sky was light blue with grey and white clouds.

We also passed Canterbury, a city with many medieval buildings, especially a beautiful cathedral, surrounded by old elm trees. I had often seen pictures representing it.

You can imagine I was looking out of the window for Ramsgate a long time before we got there.

At one o'clock I arrived at Mr. Stokes', he was absent from home but will come back to-night. During his absence his place was taken by his son (23 years old, I think), a teacher in London. I saw Mrs. Stokes at dinner. There are twenty-four boys from ten to fourteen years. (It is a pleasant sight to see them at their dinner.) So the school is not large. The window looks out on the sea. After dinner we took a walk out on the shore, it was very beautiful. The houses on the shore are generally built in simple Gothic style of yellow stone, and have gardens full of cedars and other dark evergreens. There is a harbour full of ships, shut in between stone dykes, where one can walk. And then there is the sea in its unspoiled state and that is very beautiful. Yesterday everything was grey. In the evening we went with the boys to church. On the wall of the church was written: "Lo, I am with thee alway, even unto the end of the world."

At eight o'clock the boys go to bed and they rise at six.

There is another assistant teacher of seventeen years. He, four boys and myself sleep in another house near by, where I have a little room that is waiting for some prints on the wall.

And now enough for to-day. What happy days we spent together! Thanks, thanks for everything. Love to all and a handshake from

Your loving,

Vincent.

Thanks for your letters, they arrived just now, I will soon write more when I have been here a few days and have seen Mr. Stokes.

61

Dear Theo, Ramsgate April 17 1876.

I arrived here safely at one o'clock yesterday and one of my first impressions was that the window of the not very large school looks out on the sea. It is a boarding school and there are twenty-four boys from ten to fourteen years. Mr. Stokes is out of town for a few days and so I have not seen him yet but to-night he will come back. There is another assistant teacher of seventeen years.

Yesterday evening and this morning we all took a walk along the shore. Enclosed is a spray of seaweed.

The houses near the sea are generally built of yellow brick in the style of those in the Nassaulaan in the Hague, but they are higher and have gardens full of cedars and other dark evergreens. There is a harbour full of ships enclosed by stone dykes on which one can walk. Yesterday everything was grey.

By and by I shall go and unpack my trunks, which have just been delivered and I am going to hang some prints in my room.

The holidays have not yet finished, so I have not had to give any lessons so far. I am longing to see Mr. Stokes.

I must go for a walk with the boys.

à Dieu, always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

62

Dear Theo, Ramsgate April 21 1876.

Enclosed you will find a post-office order of ten shillings and an advertisement for Anna.

Be so kind as to have it put in any paper you think best. If it is not enough I will send you the rest, and if it is too much buy some photographs with it and send to Etten on the 21st of May,[1] but tell me at all events how much you paid for the advertisement, I should like to know the address in case I should want it again.

To-day Mr. Stokes has come home. He is a man of medium height, with bald head and whiskers, the boys seem to respect him

[1] The silver wedding of their parents.

and yet to like him. A few hours after his homecoming he was playing at marbles with them; we often go to the beach. This morning I helped the boys to make a fortress of sand, as we did in the garden at Zundert.

I should like to give you a peep through the school window. The house stands on a square (all the houses around it are the same) that is often the case here. In the middle of the square is a large lawn, shut off by iron railings and surrounded by lilac bushes, in the recreation hour the boys play there; the house where I lodge is in the same square.

When I was in Rotterdam, and heard that I had to wait there a long time, I was on the point of coming to the Hague, I even went to the station. Yet I did not go, later on I hope to see everything and everybody there with a calmer eye.

The leave-taking from home on Good Friday I shall never forget. In the morning we went to church at the Hoeve,[1] and received Communion and father's text was, "Arise, let us go hence."

And in the afternoon we did arise and from the carriage window I saw father and the little brother standing on the road looking after the train.

And Sunday afternoon I was at church at Ramsgate and there I was struck by the words on the wall which you will find in Anna's letter (which I enclose).

Compliments to Roos and to everybody who may ask for me A firm handshake from

Your loving brother,

Write soon. Vincent.

63

Dear Theo, Ramsgate April 28 1876.

Many happy returns, my best wishes for this day, may our mutual love increase with the years.

I am so glad that we have so many things in common, not only memories of childhood but also that you are working in the same house in which I was till now and know so many people and places

[1] A little village in the neighbourhood of Etten.

which I know also, and that you have so much love for nature and art.

Mr. Stokes has told me that he intends to move after the holidays, of course with the whole school, to a little village on the Thames about three hours from London. There he will organize his school somewhat differently and perhaps enlarge it.

Now I am going to tell you about a walk we took yesterday. It was to an inlet of the sea, and the road thither led through fields of young corn and along hedges of hawthorn, etc.

Arrived there, we saw to our left a high steep ridge of sand and stone as high as a house of two stories. On the top of it were old, gnarled hawthorn bushes, whose black and grey moss-grown stems and branches were all bent to one side by the wind, there were also a few elder bushes.

The ground on which we walked was covered all over with big grey stones, chalk and shells.

To the right lay the sea, as calm as a pond and reflecting the light of the transparent grey sky where the sun was setting.

The tide was out and the water very low.

Thanks for your letter of yesterday, I am very glad that Willem Valkis is also an employee of the house. Give him my best regards. I wish I could walk once more with you through the woods, to Scheveningen.

Have a pleasant day to-day and give my love to all who may ask for me and believe me,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Once more my best wishes, lad, I hope you will begin a happy and prosperous year. These are important years that we are living through now and much depends on them. May everything come out all right.

A hearty handshake. à Dieu.

64

Dear Theo, Ramsgate May 1 1876.

Thanks for your letter and the placing of the advertisement. Did you find the P.O order in the letter?

Yesterday there blew such a violent wind that Mr. Stokes would not let the boys go out. But I asked for permission to go for a little walk with six of the elder boys. We went to the beach, it was high tide and it was a tough job to walk against the wind, we saw the lifeboat brought in by a tug, returning from an expedition to a ship that had been stranded on a sandbank far away, but they brought nothing with them.

I know that picture by Willems very well; the drawing by Mauve, of which you write must be beautiful. Do you sometimes go to his studio? And now you ask me what I teach the boys.

In the first place, elementary French; one boy has started German and then other things, sums for instance; I hear their lessons, give dictation, etc. So for the present it is not difficult to give them their lessons, but to really teach them will be more difficult.

And now to-day is your birthday, in thought I give you a firm handshake and send you my very best wishes once more. Of course after school hours I have to keep an eye on the boys, so my time is pretty well taken up and will be more so in the future. Last Saturday night I helped six of the young gentlemen to take a bath; I did it for my own pleasure and because I wanted them to be ready in time. Not because I had to do it.

I also try to make them read, I have some books that are well suited for boys: "The Wide, Wide World," [1] etc.

And now good-bye, thanks for your letter, for placing the advertisement and for sending the paper. Always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

One of these days you will receive some English hymn-books, I shall mark a few poems in them. There are so many beautiful ones, especially when one hears these often, one grows so fond of them.

65

Dear Theo, Ramsgate May 6 1876.

By the same mail you will receive the two little books I promised you. I marked a few things in them but besides those you will

[1] By Elizabeth Wetherell [Susan Warner].

find many other beautiful ones. But as I wrote to you already, one grows so fond of them, especially when one is in the country itself. It is again Saturday night, it is fine weather to-day; the sea is very calm and it is low tide at this moment, the sky is a fine pale blue and it is hazy in the distance. Early this morning it was very beautiful too, then everything was clear, where there is now more or less haze.

The town has something very peculiar, everywhere you see the influence of the sea, but you know that characteristic too, for one finds it also at the Hague and Scheveningen.

Do you go to see Uncle Cor now and then? Sometimes I have such a longing to see him, I wrote to him yesterday. Tell Mr. Tersteeg something about the school here. These are really very happy days I spend here day by day but still *it is a happiness and quiet which I do not quite trust*, but one thing may follow from another. Man is not easily content, now he finds things too easy and then again he is not contented enough. But this is between parenthesis, we must not talk about it but continue quietly on our way.

Spend a pleasant Sunday morning. Give my love to all the Roos family also to Mr. and Mrs. Tersteeg and Betsy and a firm hand-shake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

66

Dear Theo, Ramsgate May 12 1876.

Thanks for your letter; I am also so fond of that, "Tell me the old, old story." I heard it for the first time in Paris one night in a little church where I often went. Number 12 is also very beautiful. I am sorry indeed that I did not hear Moody and Sankey when they were in London. There is such a longing for religion among the people in the large cities. Many a labourer in a factory or shop has had a pious childhood. But city life sometimes takes away the "early dew of morning." Still the longing for the "old, old story" remains; whatever is in the bottom of the heart, stays there. Eliot describes in one of her novels the life of factory workers who have formed a small community and held their services in a chapel in Lantern Yard and she calls it the "Kingdom

of God on earth," no more or less. There is something touching in seeing those thousands of people crowding to hear these evangelists.

Your plan of giving father and mother, "The Farewell," by Sadée, is a good one, so that is settled. Willemien will be there on the 21st of May. From your letter I see you also intend to go.

Do it by all means, boy, if it is possible. There is sometimes a special blessing on such an act. What a surprise it would be for them. There was a melancholy tone in mother's last letter in which with a single word she touched upon the necessity of our being so far from home, and her eyes too are troublesome. Come, boy, brighten them once more by your presence on that day. This afternoon Mr. Reid sent me a catalogue of the exposition in London. A firm handshake and congratulations on the birthday of Lies and Cor and also on the 21st of May. Kind regards to Roos, in haste,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

67

Dear Theo, Ramsgate May 31 1876.

Bravo, that you have been at Etten on the 21st of May, so four of the six children were at home. Father wrote me in detail how the day was spent.

Thanks also for your last letter.

Did I tell you about the storm I saw lately? The sea was yellowish especially near the shore; at the horizon a streak of light and above it the immense dark grey clouds from which the rain poured down in slanting streaks. The wind blew the dust from the little white path on the rocks into the sea and swayed the blooming hawthorn bushes and wallflowers that grow on the rocks. To the right, were fields of young green corn and in the distance the town that looked like the towns that Albrecht Dürer used to etch. A town with its turrets, mills, slate roofs and houses built in Gothic style, and below, the harbour between two dykes, projecting far into the sea. I also saw the sea last Sunday night, everything was dark and grey, but at the horizon the day began to dawn.

It was still very early but a lark was singing already. So were the nightingales in the gardens near the sea. In the distance shone the light from the lighthouse, the guardship, etc.

That same night I looked from the window of my room on the roofs of the houses that can be seen from there and on the tops of the elm trees, dark against the night sky. Over those roofs, one single star, but a beautiful, large friendly one. And I thought of you all and of my own past years and of our home, and in me arose the words and the feeling: "Keep me from being a son who makes ashamed, give me your blessing, not because I deserve it but for my mother's sake. Thou art love, cover all things. Without Thy continued blessings we succeed in nothing."

Enclosed is a little drawing of the view from the window of the school, through which the boys wave good-bye to their parents after a visit when they are going back to the station.

None of us will ever forget the view from the window. *You ought to have seen* it this week when we had rain, especially in the twilight when the lamps are lit and their light is reflected in the wet street.

Mr. Stokes was often in a bad temper, and when the boys made more noise than he liked, it sometimes happened that they had to go without their supper.

I wish you could have seen them then looking from the window, it was rather melancholy; they have so little else except their meals to look forward to and to help them pass their days. I also should like you to see them going from the dark stairs and passage to the dining-room. But there the bright sun is shining.

Another curious place is the room with the rotten floor, where are six washing basins in which they have to wash themselves and where a dim light flows through the window with its broken

panes on the washing stand, this a rather a melancholy sight. I should like to spend a winter with them or have spent a winter with them in the past to know what it is like. The boys made an oil stain on your drawing, please excuse them.

Enclosed a little note for Uncle Jan. And now good night, if anybody should ask for me give them my kind regards. Do you visit Borchers now and then, if you see him greet him for me, also Willem Valkis and all at Roos'. A handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent

68

Dear Theo,[1] [Undated.]

Just now van Iterson came to surprise me, I was glad to see him, but he seems to be a person from another world, there is so much between the time when we were together at Goupil's and now.

By the same mail you will receive "The Wide, Wide World," and another little book, give one of them to Caroline.

How I wish you could see everything here.

Saturday morning at ten o'clock, I hope to walk to London, to visit Gladwell and others.

I wish you could walk with me, a hearty handshake. à Dieu.

Ever your loving brother,

Vincent.

69

Dear Theo, Welwyn June 17 1876.

Last Monday I started from Ramsgate to London, it is a long walk and when I left it was very hot and it stayed so until the evening when I arrived in Canterbury. That same evening I went still a little farther, till I arrived at a few large beech and elm trees near a little pond where I rested for a while. At half-past three in the morning the birds began to sing at sight of dawn and I started again. It was fine to walk then.

In the afternoon I arrived at Chatham, where one sees in the

[1] Written hurriedly and with pencil.

distance between partly flooded low meadows, with elm trees here and there, the Thames full of ships; I believe it is always grey weather there. There I met a cart that brought me a few miles further but then the driver went into an Inn and I thought that he would stay there a long time, so I continued my way and arrived towards evening in the familiar suburbs of London and walked to the city along the long, long "Roads." I stayed two days in London and have been running from one part to another to see different persons, among others, a clergyman to whom I wrote. Enclosed the translation of that letter, I send it that you may know that I begin with a feeling of, "Father, I am not worthy," and "Father have mercy upon me." If I should find something it will probably be a position between clergyman and missionary in the suburbs of London among the working people. Do not speak to anybody about it yet. My salary at Mr. Stokes will be very small probably, only board and lodging and some free time to give lessons and if there is no free time to spare it will be at the most twenty pounds a year. But to continue. One night I stayed at Mr. Reid's and the next day at Mr. Gladwell's, where they were very very kind. Mr. Gladwell kissed me good-night that evening and it did me good, may it be given to me to prove now and then my friendship to his son in the future.

I wanted to go back that very evening to Welwyn; but they kept me back literally by force because of the pouring rain. However when it began to stop, about four o'clock in the morning, I set off for Welwyn.

First a long walk from one end of the city to the other. In the afternoon at five o'clock I was with our sister and was very glad to see her. She is looking well and you would like her little room as I do, with the "Good Friday," "Christ in the Garden of Olives," "Mater Dolorosa" framed in ivy.

My boy, when you read the letter to the clergyman you will perhaps think: "he is not so bad after all," but I am *sure* he is. Whatever he may be, think of him now and then. A firm handshake from . . .

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

(Enclosed letter),

Reverend Sir,

A clergyman's son who, as he has to work for his living, has no time or money to study at King's College, and besides that is already a few years older than one usually enters there, and has as yet not even begun the preparatory studies in Latin and Greek, would notwithstanding this, be happy to find a position, related to the Church, though the position of a graduated clergyman is beyond his reach.

My father is a clergyman in a village in Holland. I went to school when I was eleven and stayed there till I was sixteen. Then I had to choose a profession, but did not know what to choose. Through the intervention of one of my uncles, partner in the firm of Goupil & Co., Art dealers and Publishers of Engravings, I got a situation in his business at the Hague. For three years I was employed there. From there I went to London to learn English and after two years I left London for Paris.

Compelled by various circumstances, I have left the house of Goupil & Co., and for two months I have been a teacher at the school of Mr. Stokes at Ramsgate. But as my aim is a situation in connection with the Church, I must look for something else; though I have not been educated for the Church, perhaps my travels, my experiences in different countries, of mixing with various people, poor and rich, religious and irreligious, of work of different kinds, days of manual labour and days of office work, perhaps also the speaking of different languages may partly make up for the fact that I have not studied at college.—But the reason which I would rather give for introducing myself to you is the innate love for the Church and everything connected with it, that has slumbered now and then, but is roused again each time, and also if I may say it, though with a feeling of great insufficiency and short-coming: "The love of God and man."—And also when I think of my past life and my father's home in the Dutch village, there comes to me the feeling of "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son: make me as one of Thy hired servants. Have mercy upon me miserable sinner." When I lived in London I often went to church to hear you and have not forgotten you.

Now I ask for your recommendation in looking for a position and that you should keep your fatherly eye on me if I find such a position. I have been left very much to myself, I think your fatherly eye will do me good. Thanking you beforehand for what you may be able to do for me. . . .

70

Dear Theo, Isleworth July 5 1876.

The time may come when I shall look back with a certain melancholy, on the "Fat pots of Egypt" connected with other situations, that is to say the bigger salaries and the higher esteem from the world . . . this I foresee.

There is indeed "plenty of bread" in the houses where I shall enter if I continue the road which I began, but there is not plenty of money. And yet I see so clearly light in the distance and if that light disappears now and then, it generally happens through my own fault.

It is very doubtful whether I shall make great progress in this profession, if the six years spent in the house of Messrs. Goupil & Co., during which time I ought to have prepared myself for *this* situation, will not remain a great obstacle to me. I think however that I cannot in any way draw back now, even if a part of me should wish this (*for at present this is not the case*).

It seems to me of late that there are no other situations in the world but those of schoolmaster and clergyman, with all that lies between these two; such as missionary, especially a London Missionary, etc. I think it must be a peculiar profession to be a London Missionary, one must go around among the labourers and the poor to preach the Bible, and if one has some experience talk with them, find foreigners who are looking for work or other persons who are in difficulties and try and help them, etc., etc. Last week I went to London two or three times to find out if there was a chance of becoming one of them, as I speak several languages, and have mixed, especially in Paris and London, with people of the lower class and foreigners; being a foreigner myself, it might be that I was fit for it and might become so more and more.

However one must be at least twenty-four years old and at all events I have to wait another year.

Mr. Stokes says that he decidedly cannot give me any salary because he can get teachers enough for just board and lodging, and that is true. But will it be possible for me to continue in this way? I am afraid not, it will be decided soon enough.

But, boy, however this may be, one thing I can assure you, that these few months have bound me so strongly to the sphere that extends from schoolmaster to clergyman, as much by the pleasures connected with those professions as by the thorns that have pricked me, that I cannot draw back any more. So I have to go on!

I can assure you that some very peculiar difficulties present themselves right away and others are looming in the distance, and one is in quite a different sphere than in the house of Messrs. Goupil & Co.

When shall I get those small engravings, "Christ Consolator and Remunerator," which you promised me? Write to me as soon as you can find a moment, but send your letter to father, as my address will probably change very soon, and he will know it first.

Last week I was at Hampton Court to see the beautiful gardens and long avenues of chestnut and lime trees, where many crows and rooks have their nests, and to see also the palace and the pictures. There are among others many portraits by Holbein which are very beautiful and two splendid Rembrandts (the portrait of his wife, and of a rabbi) and also beautiful Italian portraits by Bellini, Titian, a picture by Leonardo da Vinci, cartoons by Mantegna, a beautiful picture by S. Ruysdael, a still life of fruit by Cuyp, etc. I wish you had been there with me, it was a pleasure to see pictures again.

And involuntarily, I thought of the persons who had lived there at Hampton Court, of Charles I and his wife (it was she who said, "I thank Thee my God! for having made me queen, but an unhappy queen") and at whose grave Bossuet spoke from the fullness of his heart. Do you have Bossuet's "Funeral Orations," in it you find that speech, (there is a very cheap edition, I think for fifty centimes), and I thought also of Lord and Lady Russell, who must have been there very often too, (Guizot described their lives in "Love in Marriage," you must read that when you can lay your hands on it).

Enclosed a feather from one of the rooks there.

Write as soon as you can, I long to hear from you, believe me with a handshake,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

71

Isleworth July 8 1876,

c/o Jones Esq.,

Dear Theo, Holme Court.

Your letter and the prints were a delightful surprise, they came while I was busy this morning weeding the potatoes in the garden. Many thanks, both the engravings, " Christ Consolator and Remunerator," are hanging over my desk in my little room. God is righteous, and He will bring all who err on the right path; you were thinking of that when you wrote: " May this happen, I am erring in many ways but there is still hope." Do not be unhappy about your " luxurious " life as you call it, go quietly on your way, you are more simple-hearted than I am and probably you will succeed sooner and to a greater extent.

Don't delude yourself about the liberty I have; I am bound in different ways, some even humiliating, and these will become still worse in time; but the words that are written over " Christ Consolator," " He has come to preach liberty to the prisoners," is true to this day.

Now I must ask you something. At the Hague I had lessons at the time from a Bible teacher, Hille, who then lived in the Bagynestraat. He gave himself great trouble for me, and though I didn't show it, what he told me made an impression upon me and I should like to let him hear from me, and if possible do him some small favour.

Go and visit him if you have a moment's time and if you can find his address, and tell him that I have become a schoolmaster, and am looking out for some other situation in connection with the Church. He is a very simple man who, I think, has had many struggles in life, involuntarily I sometimes thought on seeing him; the end of that man will be peace.

72

And give him the enclosed little drawing from me.

How I should like to have a glimpse of Mauve's interior, what you describe as having seen that evening when you were there, I see it distinctly before me.

Write again soon, best wishes, believe me always,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Give my kind regards to Mr. Tersteeg and his wife and Betsy, and the family Roos, and to other friends if you see them. But do not speak about me. As you see I landed after all in that other school; enclosed you will find two prospectuses. If you can recommend the school to anybody who wants to send his boy to England, do not forget it.

72

Dear Theo, Isleworth August 7 '76.

From father I heard you intended to come home some day while Anna and Elizabeth were there, tell me if you did so.

Yesterday Mr. Jones and his family came home. I had decorated the boys' dining-room with "Welcome Home," on the wall, of holly and evergreen, and large bouquets on the table. There is much holly in the garden and from a few old trees they have cut away all the branches, these are now full of young sprouts, quite white or yellowish with a pink leaf here and there and that is very beautiful; I gathered a large bunch of it and put it on the table.

Mr. Jones asked me if I could tell him the price in Holland of fifty pounds of butter, if it is not too expensive he intends to have it always sent over from Holland, please ask Mrs. Roos how much it is, and write me as soon as possible.

I suppose the boys will now soon arrive.

Have you ever read, with attention the story of Elijah and Elisha? I read it over one day and enclosed I send you what I copied from it. It is so beautiful. I also read in the Acts of the Apostles, how Paul was standing on the shore and they fell on his neck and kissed him, and that word by Paul touched me, "God comforts the simple hearted."

It is God who makes men and who can make our lives rich in

moments and periods of higher living and higher feeling. Has the sea made itself or an oak tree? But men like our father are more beautiful than the sea. Yet the sea is very beautiful; there were many bugs at Mr. Stokes, but the view from the school window made one forget them.

The heart of an ordinary mortal sometimes "sinks within him for yearning" at the sight of those who work for, and devote themselves to Him, who baptized them with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, and their eyes sometimes moisten with sadness when they look back to the days of their youth and to the "Good things with which He satisfied them." Yet their sublime peace is better than the deceitful calm of former days. The real quiet and peace begins only, "when there is nothing left in which to rest," and when "there is no other desire than for God." Then their heart cries "woe is me" and they pray, "Who will deliver me from the body of this death," but still this is the best time of life, and blessed are those who reach that high summit.

I heard this said by two men, one in Paris, Dr. Bersier, who, in the anguish of great bodily suffering that was awaiting him, exclaimed, in his sermon, "Who will deliver me from the body of this death," in a tone that made everybody in church shudder. And I heard our father say it in his sermon (in April when I was home), but he said it in a softer tone, yet it was more penetrating than that of the other and he continued—and his face was like unto an angel's—"The blessed in Heaven they say, 'what Thou art now, I too was once; what I am now, thou shalt be.'" Our father and those in heaven are separated by the same stretch of life, that separates our father from ourselves. God in Heaven can make us our father's brethren and unite us both more and more strongly together; be that so, my boy, for surely you know how much I love you?

Yesterday I took a beautiful walk along the Thames, at the other side there were beautiful country places and gardens. It was a sky like Ruysdael or Constable would have painted.

A firm handshake, kind regards to Roos, and believe me,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Dear Theo, Isleworth August 18 1876.

Yesterday I went to see Gladwell who is home for a few days; something very sad happened to his family: his sister, a girl full of life, with dark eyes and hair, seventeen years old, fell from her horse on Blackheath, she was unconscious when they lifted her and died five hours later without returning to consciousness.

As soon as I heard what happened and that Gladwell was at home, I went there. Yesterday morning at eleven o'clock I started from here and had a long walk to Lewisham, the road ran from one end of London to another; at five o'clock I was with Gladwell.

They had all just come back from the funeral, it was indeed a house of mourning and it was good to be with them. I felt a kind of shyness and shame on witnessing that great impressive sorrow. "Blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that sorrow, but always rejoice, blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Blessed are those who find love on their road, who are bound together by God, for to them all things will work together for their good."

I had a long talk with Harry until late in the evening, about all kinds of things, about the Kingdom of God and about the Bible, and talking thus we walked up and down the station, and I think we shall never forget those last moments before we said good-bye. We know each other so well, his work was my work, the people he knows there, I know also, his life was my life, and it was given me to look so deeply into the history of the family because I love them, less so because I know the particulars of that history, then because I understand the key to their personality and their life.

Thus we walked up and down the station, in that common-place world, but with a feeling that was not common-place.

They do not last long such moments and soon we had to part. It was a beautiful view from the train, over London that was lying there in the dark, St. Paul's and other churches in the distance. I went by train to Richmond and walked along the Thames to Isleworth. It was a beautiful walk, to the left the parks with their large poplars, oaks, and elms, to the right the river in which the large trees were mirrored.

It was a beautiful almost solemn evening, I reached home a

quarter past ten. Thanks for your last letter. You had not written yet that Mrs. V. was dead; how often did I accompany her home in the evening. How I should have liked to walk with you all to the Hoeve! I often teach the boys Bible history, and last Sunday I read the Bible with them. Every morning and evening we read the Bible and sing and pray. And that is a good thing. At Ramsgate we did the same and when those twenty-one boys from the London markets and streets prayed: "Our Father who art in Heaven, . . . give us this day our daily bread, . . ." I often thought of the cry of the young ravens to which the Lord listens, and it did me good to pray with them and to bend my head lower than they probably did at the words; "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil . . ."

I am still full of what happened yesterday, how I should have wished to comfort that father, but before him I stood embarrassed, to the son I could speak. There was something holy in that house yesterday.

Have you ever read, "A Life for a Life," by the author of "John Halifax"?[1] I am sure you would like that. How are you getting on with your English? It was delightful to take a long walk once more, here at school they walk very little. When I think of my life full of struggle in Paris last year, and compare it with this, where I sometimes do not get out of doors the whole day, at least not farther than the garden, I sometimes think, when shall I come back to that other world? If I go back to it, it will be probably in other work than last year.—But I think I prefer teaching Bible history to the boys to walking, one feels more or less safe in doing the first; and now kind regards to Roos and to anybody who may ask for me. A handshake in thought and best wishes from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Enclosed is a letter for Mauve, you may read it; I think it is right not to forget one's former acquaintances, therefore I write to some of them now and then, also in Paris to Soek and others.

I write between school hours and rather in a hurry as you see; if you can persuade somebody to read "Scenes from Clerical

[1] Dinah Maria Mulock, afterwards Mrs. Craik.

Life," by Eliot, and "Felix Holt," you do a good work. The first is so splendid.

74

Dear Theo, Isleworth August 26 1876.

Enclosed you will find a note for Mr. Tersteeg; the last time I wrote to him I was still in Paris and it was time to write to him again. Since I left the Hague we have not lost sight of each other.

It is a beautiful morning, the sun is shining through the tall acacia trees on the playground and glitters on the roofs and windows visible behind the garden, there are already gossamer threads in the garden, and it is cool in the morning and the boys tramp up and down to get warm. To-night in the bedroom I hope to tell them the story of Johannes and Theogenes. I tell them all kinds of stories in the evening, for instance, the Conscript by Conscience, and Madam Theresa by Erckmann-Chatrian, and Old Year by Jean Paul, which I send you at the same time, and Andersen's Fairy Tales: The Story of a Mother, the Little Red Shoes, the Little Match Seller, King Robert of Sicily by Longfellow, etc.

I also sometimes tell them facts from Dutch History. Daily I read the Bible with them and that is something more than a pleasure. No day passes without praying to God and without speaking about God. At present my speaking about Him isn't much, but with God's help and blessing, it will become better. Did I ever tell you about that picture by Boughton, "The Pilgrim's Progress"? It is towards evening. A sandy path leads over the hills, to a mountain on the top of which is the Holy City, lit by the sun which is setting red behind the grey evening clouds. On the road is a pilgrim who wants to go to the City, he is already tired and asks of a woman in black, who is standing by the road and whose name is "Sorrowful yet always rejoicing,"

Does the road go uphill all the way?
"Yes, to the very end,"
And will the journey take all day long?
"Yes, from morn till night, my friend." [1]

The landscape through which the road winds is so beautiful, brown heath, with here and there birches and pine trees and patches

[1] Wrongly quoted by Vincent. From Christina Rossetti.

of yellow sand, and far in the distance against the sun, the mountain. Indeed it is not a picture but an inspiration.

I write to you between lessons, to-day I broke away for a few minutes and walked between the hedges with Johannes and Theogenes, to study it. How I wish you could see the playground now, and the gardens behind it in the twilight. In school the gas is flickering and one hears the cheerful sound of the boys, learning their lessons, from time to time one of them begins to hum the tune of some hymn, and in me there is something of the "old faith": I am by no means yet what I should wish to be, but with God's help, I will succeed.

Thanks for your postcard. Mr. Jones has not yet decided what he will do. My compliments to all who may ask for me, a handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

One word more. I have just been telling the story of Johannes and Theagenes, first in the room where the greater part of the boys sleep, and then in the upper room where there are four more, in the dark, but when I had finished they had gradually all fallen asleep. No wonder, for they had been racing about a great deal to-day on the playground, and then you see I do not speak without difficulty, and how that sounds to English ears, I do not know, but "practice makes perfect." I think the Lord has adopted me just as I am, with all my faults, though I am still hoping for closer adoption. To-morrow night I must tell the same story to the assistant and two older boys, who stay up later. These three and I have our supper together. While I was telling my story I heard one of them downstairs play "Tell me the old, old story," on the piano. It is already late and to tell the truth I am not allowed to stay up so late according to the rules of the school. I smoked my pipe in the playground just now, it was so beautiful outside there and even in the little yard, where they keep a pig the greater part of the year, but for the moment it is not there. It is nice to go around in the evening from one end of the grounds and house to the other.

And now good-night, and sleep well and when you say your

prayers at night remember me as I do you. Good-night, boy. A handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

75

Dear Theo, Isleworth October 3 1876.

From home I heard that you are ill. Poor lad, how I should like to be with you. Yesterday night I walked to Richmond, and all the way over I was thinking of you, it was a beautiful grey evening, you know that I go there every Monday night, to the Methodist Chapel; last evening I spoke a few words about: "Nothing pleaseth me but in Jesus Christ, and in Him everything pleaseth me."

But how I should like to be with you, oh! why are we all so far away from each other, but how can it be helped. Enclosed I send you a letter from the aunts at Zundert, you know that Aunt Bet has injured herself. I wrote to them that you and I would come and walk over to Zundert at Christmas if possible.

I copy a few of the psalms for you, perhaps you will like to read them one of these days. Write to me a little word as soon as you can. Last Saturday week, I made a long trip to London, and heard there about a position, that perhaps might do for me sometime. The clergymen at seaports like Liverpool and Hull often want assistants, who can speak several languages, to work among the sailors and the foreigners and also to visit the sick, some salary would be attached to such a position.

In the morning I left here early at four o'clock, it was beautiful in the park here with the dark avenues of elm trees and the wet road through it, and a grey rainy sky over it all, in the distance there was a thunderstorm.

At daybreak I was in Hyde Park and there the leaves were already falling from the trees and the Virginia creeper against the houses was beautifully red, and there was a mist. At seven o'clock I was at Kensington, and rested a little in a church there where I used to go so many Sunday mornings.

In London I visited some friends and was also at the gallery of

Messrs. Goupil & Co., and saw there the drawings that van Iterson had brought with him, and it was delightful to see once more the Dutch towns and meadows in that way. That picture by Artz; the "Mill on the Canal," I think very fine.

You also have a beautiful life before you, Theo, keep courage.

Has van Iterson come back already? I was so glad to see him again, he brings for you, "The Wide, Wide World," read that one of these days, especially the first chapters are very fine, and so true and simple. And read now and then in Longfellow, for instance,

"I see the lights of the village, gleam through the rain and the mist, and a feeling of sadness comes o'er me, that my soul cannot resist."

And now, boy, a handshake for you and for Uncle Jan. Adieu, keep courage and get better quickly, write soon how you are, and send back the letter of the aunts then. Poor Aunt Bet, we are such old friends. Oh! Zundert your memories are at times almost too strong. à Dieu, boy, may God unite us more and more and make us true brothers. Compliments to Uncle Jan and to all the Roos family, from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Paris will be beautiful now in autumn. Last year Gladwell and I went every Sunday to as many friends and as many churches as possible, we went out in the morning and came home late. Notre Dame is so splendid in autumn, in the evening between the chestnut trees. But there is something in Paris more beautiful than the autumn and the churches and that is: the poor. I often think of many over there.

76

Dear Theo, Isleworth October 7 1876.

It is Saturday again and I write once more. How I long to see you again, Oh! my longing is sometimes so strong. Write soon, a little word, how you are.

Last Wednesday we took a long walk to a village an hour's distance from here. The road led through meadows and fields, along hedges of hawthorn, full of blackberries and clematis, and

here and there a large elm tree. It was so beautiful when the sun set behind the grey clouds, and the shadows were long. By chance we met the school of Mr. Stokes, where there are still several of the boys I knew.

The clouds retained their red hue long after the sun had set and the dusk had settled over the fields, and we saw in the distance the lamps lit in the village. While I was writing to you, I was called to Mr. Jones, who asked if I would walk to London to collect some money for him. And when I came home in the evening, hurrah there was a letter from father with tidings about you. How I should like to be with you both, my boy. And thank God, there is some improvement, though you are still weak. And you will be longing to see mother, and now that I hear that you are going home with her, I think of the words of Conscience:[1]

"I have been ill, my mind was tired, my soul disillusioned and my body suffering. I whom God has endowed at least with moral energy and a strong instinct of affection, I fell in the abyss of the most bitter discouragement and I felt with horror how a deadly poison penetrated my heart. I spent three months on the moors, you know that beautiful region where the soul retires within itself and enjoys a delicious rest, where everything breathes calm and peace; where the soul in presence of God's immaculate creation, throws off the yoke of conventions, forgets society, and loosens its bonds, with the strength of renewed youth; where each thought takes the form of prayer, where everything that is not in harmony with fresh and free nature quits the heart. Oh, there the tired souls find rest, there the exhausted man regains his youthful strength. So I passed my days of illness. . . . And then the evening! To be seated before the big fireplace, the feet in the ashes, the eyes fixed on a star that sends its ray through the opening in the chimney as if to call me, or absorbed in vague dreams to look at the fire, to see the flames rise, flicker, and supplant one another as if envious to lick the kettle with their tongues of fire, and to think that such is human life: to be born, to work, to love, to grow and to disappear."

Mr. Jones has promised me that I shall not have to teach so much in future, but that I may work more in his parish, visiting the

[1] A Flemish author

people, talking with them, etc. May God give His blessing to me.

Now I am going to tell you about my walk to London. I left here at twelve o'clock in the morning and reached my destination between five and six. When I came into that part of the town where most of the picture galleries are, around the Strand, I met many acquaintances: it was dinner-time, so many were in the street, leaving the office or going back there. First I met a young clergyman who once preached here, and with whom I then became acquainted, and then the employee of Mr. Wallis, and then one of the Messrs. Wallis himself, whom I used to visit now and then at his house, now he has two children; then I met Mr. Reid and Mr. Richardson, who are already old friends. Last year about this time Mr. Richardson was in Paris and we walked together to Père Lachaise.

After that I went to van Wisselingh, where I saw sketches for two church windows. In the middle of one window the portrait of a middle-aged lady, oh, such a noble face, with the words "Thy will be done," over it, and in the other window, the portrait of her daughter, with the words, "Faith, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." There, and in the gallery of Messrs. Goupil & Co., I saw beautiful pictures and drawings. It is such an intense delight to be so often reminded of Holland by art.

In the City I went to see Mr. Gladwell and to St. Paul's Church. And from the City to the other end of London, where I visited a boy who had left the school of Mr. Stokes because of illness and I found him quite well playing in the street. Then to the place where I had to collect the money for Mr. Jones. The suburbs of London have a peculiar charm, between the little houses and gardens are open spots covered with grass and generally with a church or school or workhouse in the middle between the trees and shrubs, and it can be so beautiful there, when the sun is setting red in the thin evening mist.

Yesterday evening it was so, and afterwards I wished you could have seen those London streets when the twilight began to fall and the lamps were lit, and everybody went home; everything showed that it was Saturday night and in all that bustle there was peace, one felt the need of, and the excitement at the approaching

Sunday. Oh, those Sundays and all that is done and accomplished on those Sundays, it is such a comfort for those poor districts and crowded streets.

In the City it was dark, but it was a beautiful walk along the row of churches one has to pass. Near the Strand I took a bus that took me quite a long way, it was already pretty late. I passed the little church of Mr. Jones and saw in the distance another one, where at that hour a light was still burning, I entered and found it to be a very beautiful little Catholic church, where a few women were praying. Then I came to that dark park about which I have written you already and from there I saw in the distance the lights of Isleworth and the church with the ivy, and the churchyard with the weeping willows towards the Thames.

To-morrow I shall get for the second time, some small salary for my new work, and with it buy a pair of new boots and a new hat. And then, with God's will, I shall again start on my way.

In the London streets they sell everywhere scented violets, they blossom here twice a year. I bought some for Mrs. Jones to make her forget the pipe I smoke now and then, especially late in the evening on the playground, but the tobacco here makes one rather gloomy.

Well, Theo, try to get well soon and read this letter when mother is sitting with you, because I should like to be with you both in thought. I cannot tell you how glad I am that Mr. Jones has promised to give me work in his parish, so that I shall find by and by what I want. I am longing so much for you. A handshake for yourself and one for mother when she is sitting beside you. Many regards to the Roos family and to everyone I know, especially to Mr. Tersteeg. Tell mother it was delightful to put on a pair of socks knitted by her, after that long walk to London.

This morning the sun rose so beautifully again, I see it every morning when I wake the boys, à Dieu.

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Dear Mother and Theo, Isleworth Oct. 13 1876.

To-morrow the boys go home and then I shall receive my money. I asked Mr. Jones to let me go to you in those three days, my heart is so with you. It depends now on you both, if you say that I may come, Mr. Jones will let me go. Besides longing to sit at Theo's bedside, I should like so much to see my mother again and if possible to go also to Etten to see father and to speak with him, it would only be for a short time, I should be with you for but one or two days.

Last Monday I was again at Richmond, and I lectured on the words, " He has sent me to preach the gospel," but whoever wants to preach the gospel must carry it in his own heart first. Oh! may I find it, for it is only the word spoken in earnestness and from the fullness of the heart, that can bear fruit. Perhaps I shall go to London or Lewisham again one of these days.

Just now I gave a German lesson to Mr. Jones' daughters, and after the lesson I told them " The Snow Queen " by Andersen.

If you can, let me know by the next mail if I may come; I was so happy over mother's last letter.

One of these days I hope to visit Mr. Stokes' school. And I shall have to buy a pair of new boots to make myself ready for new wanderings.

The view from the window of your little room must be fine now, you see I know that of old. We are having much rain here at present, in Holland I suppose it is the same. At Christmas I shall have a fortnight or three weeks to go to Holland, if Anna can go too we might come together. And now winter is slowly approaching again, try to be your old self by that time. How welcome is that Christmas time in winter. Oh! my boy, I look forward so much to the time when it will be cold here and I shall have to go around at Turnham Green.

When I think of you as one, " Who comforts his mother, and who is worthy to be comforted by his mother," I almost envy you, but try to get better soon. Yesterday I asked Mr. Jones to let me go to Holland, but he would not allow it, and at last he said: " Write to your mother, if she approves of it, I will too "

What beautiful poems are those of de Genestet's;[1] "On the Mountains of Sorrow," and "When I was a Boy."

A handshake for both of you and for the Roos family, and Willem and for any others you see whom I know. And let me hear soon from you again and believe me,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

78

Dear Theo, [Undated.]

How grateful I was for your little note, and for mother's letter; so we shall wait until Christmas and may God give us a happy meeting then. "My illness is no misfortune." No, for "Sorrow is better than laughter." No—illness, when supported by God's arm is no misfortune, especially when in those days of illness, we get new ideas and new intentions, that would not have come to us if we had not been ill, and when we get in those days clearer faith and stronger trust in God.

"Man's extremity is God's opportunity." In our weakness we are strong. Illness sanctifies health and teaches us to keep well. But do get well soon, my boy, oh! how I long for Christmas.

Yesterday I was in Mr. Jones' church[2] to help with the preparations for to-night. A clergyman from Leicester will then lecture on the Reformation and illustrate it by magic lantern slides from that period.

I have already seen some of the pictures, they are in the style of Holbein, you know that many painters and designers here work in that style; there was a very beautiful picture of Luther's marriage.

Last Monday there was a "tea-meeting" in that church, it was the anniversary of its opening. More than two hundred and fifty people were at tea, and afterwards Mr. Jones and a few other clergymen spoke until late in the evening.

It is very beautiful here lately, especially in the streets in the evening, when it is more or less hazy and the lamps are lit, and

[1] A popular Dutch poet.
[2] A little wooden church at Turnham Green.

also in the park, about which I wrote to you. A few days ago I saw there the sun setting behind the elm trees, the leaves of which have now the colour of bronze. Over the grass was that mist about which Anna wrote, and the brook in which the swans swim runs through the park. The acacia trees on the playground have almost lost their leaves, I see them through the window before my desk, sometimes they stand out dark against the sky, sometimes I see the sun rise red in the mist behind them. It will soon be winter now, I am so glad Christmas comes in winter, therefore I like winter best of all seasons.

How delightful it will be to sail down the Thames and across the sea, and see those friendly Dutch dunes and the church spire that is visible from afar.

How little we see of each other and how little we see of our parents, and yet so strong is the family feeling and our love for each other that the heart uplifts itself and the eye turns to God and prays: "Do not let me stray too far from them, not too far Oh! Lord."

Adieu, boy, my very best wishes, greetings for Roos, and to other acquaintances if you see them and believe me with a handshake,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

79

Dear Theo, Isleworth.

It is more than time that you hear from me again. Thank God you are recovering. I am longing so much for Christmas—that time will be here perhaps before we know it, though it seems long now.

Theo, your brother has preached for the first time, last Sunday, in God's dwelling, of which is written, "In this place, I will give peace." Enclosed a copy of what I said.[1] May it be the first of many more.

It was a clear autumn day and a beautiful walk from here to Richmond, along the Thames, in which the great chestnut trees

[1] See this copy at the end of the division England page 96.

with their load of yellow leaves, and the clear blue sky were mirrored, and through the tops of the trees one could see that part of Richmond which lies on the hill, the houses with their red roofs and uncurtained windows, and green gardens, and the grey spire high above them, and below the long grey bridge with the tall poplars at each side, over which the people passed like little black figures.

When I was standing in the pulpit I felt like somebody who, emerging from a dark cave under ground comes back to the friendly daylight, and it is a delightful thought that in the future wherever I shall come, I shall preach the Gospel; to do that *well*, one must have the Gospel in one's heart, may the Lord give it to me.

You know enough of life, Theo, to understand that a *poor* preacher stands rather alone in the world, but the Lord can rouse in us more and more the consciousness and belief in "Yet I am not alone for the Father is with me." But, boy, how I am longing for Christmas and for you all; it seems to me I have grown years older in these few months.

Yesterday evening I was again at Richmond and walked through a large grassy field surrounded by trees and houses, over which the church spire rises. The dew was lying on the grass and the twilight was falling: on one side the sky was still aglow from the setting sun, on the other side the moon was rising. Under the trees an old lady was walking, dressed in black, with beautiful grey hair. In the middle of the grass plot the boys had lit a large fire, that one saw flickering from afar, I thought of the lines: "Once at the evening of my life, tired from care and strife, I'll bring Thee praise more loud and fair, for each day given to me here."[1] à Dieu, a handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Thursday week I hope to speak in Mr. Jones' church on Johannes and Theagenes. Your brother was indeed deeply moved when he stood at the foot of the pulpit and bowed his head and prayed: Abba Father, in Your name may be our beginning.

Regards to Mr. and Mrs. Tersteeg and all at Roos' and to van Iterson and to anybody you may see who knows me.

[1] Dutch hymns.

Dear Theo, Isleworth Nov. 10 1876.

I feel that I must enclose a little note for you. You will spend delightful days at home, I almost envy you, my boy.

What beautiful autumn weather we are having. I think you will see the sun rise in the morning. In what room are you sleeping?

If you can get hold of the "Imitation of Christ," you must read it, it is a splendid book that gives much light.

It expresses so well,—for he who wrote the book put it into practice himself—how good it is to fight the Holy Strife for duty, and the great joy given by being charitable and by doing one's duty *well*.

You must read this letter to father and mother. I have taken such beautiful walks lately, they were such a relief after the closeness of the first months here.

It is true that every day has its own evil, and its good too. But how difficult must life be, especially farther on when the evil of each day increases as far as worldly things go, if it is not strengthened and comforted by faith. And in Christ all worldly things may become better and as it were sanctified.

It is a beautiful saying and happy are those who know it: "Nothing pleaseth me but in Christ, and in Him all things please me."

But that is not acquired so easily, still, "seek and ye shall find."

Next time when father and mother write, send me a little word too. Monday evening I hope to go to Richmond again, and to choose for text the words: "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion." Theo, woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel; if I did not aim at that and possessed faith and hope in Christ, it would be bad for me indeed, but now I have some courage.

I should have liked to have you with me last Thursday evening, in the little church at Turnham Green. I walked there with the eldest boy of the school, and told him some of Andersen's tales, "The Story of a Mother" among others.

And now we are slowly approaching winter, and many people dread it, but it is pleasant at Christmas time, which is like moss

on the roofs and like the pine trees, the holly and evergreen in the snow! How I should like to meet Anna; I shall write to her again to-day. To-day one of the servants left; they do not have an easy life here and she could bear it no longer; everyone, rich or poor, strong or weak, has his moments in which he can go no further and when, "All these things seem against us," when many things that we have built up tumble down. But never despair, Elijah had to pray seven times, and David had ashes on his head many times.

A new assistant has come to the school, for I shall in the future work more at Turnham Green; he has never been from home until now, and it will not be easy for him in the beginning. And now a firm handshake in thought, it is already late, and I am rather tired, best wishes and don't forget

Your most affectionate brother,

Vincent.

81

Dear father and mother, Isleworth Nov. 17 1876.

Thank God that Theo had almost recovered, bravo, that he has walked with father in the snow to the Heike, I wish I had been with you too. It is already late, and early to-morrow morning I must go for Mr. Jones to London and Lewisham, where I hope to visit the Gladwells, it will be late in the evening when I come back.

Where do Mr. Jones and others get their income from? Yes, I have often thought about it myself.

The saying one often hears here is: God takes care of those who work for Him. I am longing to speak and consult with you about this question. And then you asked me if I still teach the boys; generally I do until one o'clock in the afternoon, and then after one o'clock I go out for Mr. Jones, or sometimes give lessons to Mr. Jones' children or to a few boys in town. And then in the evening and between times I write in my sermon book.

Last Sunday I was early at Turnham Green to teach at Sunday school, it was a real English rainy day, in the morning Mr. Jones preached about the woman of Samaria and then there was again

Sunday school, on weekdays too I have to work for it, there are children enough but the difficulty is to get them together regularly. Mr. Jones and his boys and I went in the afternoon to take tea with the sexton, a shoemaker who lives in one of the suburbs. The view from the windows there reminded me of Holland, a grass field, changed into a swamp by the pouring rain, around it rows of little red houses with their gardens and the lights of the lamps that were lit. In the evening Mr. Jones preached about Naaman the Syrian, a very beautiful sermon, and then came the walk home.

Last Thursday Mr. Jones made me take his turn, and my text was: "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear Me this day were both almost and altogether such as I am except these bonds."

Next Sunday I have to go in the evening to Petersham, to a Methodist church. Petersham is a village on the Thames, twenty minutes beyond Richmond. I do not know what text I shall take, The Prodigal Son or Psalm 42–1, in the morning and afternoon there is Sunday school at Turnham Green.

And so the weeks go by and we are approaching winter and a merry Christmas. To-morrow I must be in the two remotest parts of London, in Whitechapel, that very poor part about which you have read in Dickens, and then across the Thames in a little steamer and from there to Lewisham. The children of Mr. Jones have recovered, but now three of the boys have got the measles.

This week I had to go with one of the boys, for Mr. Jones to Acton Green, that grass plot which I saw from the sexton's window.

It was very muddy there, but it was a beautiful sight, when it grew dark and the fog began to rise and one saw the light of a little church in the middle of the plain, and to our left was the railroad on a rather high dyke, and a train just passed and that was a beautiful sight, the red glow of the engine and the row of lights in the carriages in the twilight. To our right a few horses were grazing in a meadow surrounded by a hedge of hawthorn, crossed by blackberries. While I sit writing to you in my little room, and it is so very very quiet, and I look at your portraits and the prints on the wall—"Christus Consolator," and "Good Friday," and "Women Visiting the Tomb," and "The Old Huguenot" and

"The Prodigal Son," by Ary Scheffer, and "A Little Boat on a Stormy Sea," and an etching—"An Autumn Landscape," a view on the Heath, that Harry Gladwell gave me on my birthday—and when I think of you all and of everything here, of Turnham Green, Richmond and Petersham, then I feel: Hear, Oh Lord, the prayer that my mother prayed for me when I left my parents' roof, "Father I pray Thee not to take him away from the world but to deliver him from evil," and "Oh Lord, make me my father's brother, a Christian and a Christian labourer. Finish Thy work in me that Thou hast begun and unite us, Oh Lord, firmly together and may the love for thee strengthen that bond more and more."

And now good night to you both and to Theo and Willemien and Cor, I am longing to hear from you again. Good night, I must start early to-morrow morning, a handshake from

Your most affectionate,

Vincent.

(With pencil there was written underneath.)

From the other end of London.

Good-bye everyone! I started this morning at four o'clock, now it is two; I just passed through the old cabbage fields, now for Lewisham. One sometimes asks, how shall I ever reach my destination, à Dieu.

82

Dear Theo, Isleworth Nov. 25 1876.

Thanks for your last letter which I received at the same time with one from Etten. So you are at your work again; do whatever your hand finds to do, with all your strength, and a blessing will not fail. How I should have loved to accompany you on that walk to Heike and to Sprundel in the first snow. Father wrote to me: "In the afternoon I had to go to the Hoeve. Mother had ordered a carriage but they could not drive because the horses' shoes could not yet be sharpened: so I resolved to go on foot and dear Uncle Jan would not let me go alone, but went with me. It was an uncomfortable expedition, but Uncle Jan rightly observed: the devil is never so black but you can look him in the face. We

arrived safely and came home safely, though there was a storm, accompanied by sleet so that the road was as slippery as glass, and it was delightful beyond all words to sit comfortably together in a nice warm room in the evening and to rest after labour." Shall we also go together like that to some church some day? Being sorrowful but always happy, with an eternal joy in our hearts, because we are the poor in the Kingdom of God. God grant it. Last Sunday evening I went to a village on the Thames, called Petersham, in the morning I had been at the Sunday school in Turnham Green and went from there after sunset to Richmond and from there to Petersham. Soon it became dark and I did not know the right way. It was a very muddy road, across a kind of dyke, the slope of which was covered with gnarled elm trees and bushes. At last I saw a light in a little house and climbed and waded through the mud to reach it, and there they showed me the right way. But, boy, there was a beautiful little wooden church with kindly light at the end of that dark road. I read Acts v. 14–16 and Acts xii. 5–17, Peter in prison; and then I told the story of Johannes and Theagenes once more. There was a little organ in the church that was played by a young lady from a boarding school, the pupils of which were all there.

In the morning it was so beautiful on the road to Turnham Green, the chestnut trees, and the clear blue sky, and the morning sun mirrored in the water of the Thames, the grass was sparkling green and all around one heard the sound of the church bells. The day before I made a long tramp to London. I left here at four o'clock in the morning, and at half-past six was in Hyde Park, there the dew was lying on the grass and the leaves were falling from the trees, in the distance one saw the pale lights of the lamps which had not yet been put out, and the towers of Westminster Abbey and the houses of Parliament, and the sun rose red in the morning mist—from there to Whitechapel, the poor part of London, then to Chancery Lane and Westminster, then to Clapham to visit Mrs. Loyer again, who had her birthday the day before. I was also at Mr. Obach's to see his wife and the children again.

Then from there to Lewisham, where I arrived at half-past three at the Gladwells'. It was just three months ago since I was there on the Saturday that their little daughter was buried. I spent about three hours with them and many were the thoughts

that came to us all, too many for expression. From there I also wrote to Harry in Paris. I hope you will meet him some day, it may easily happen that you too will come to Paris. At half-past ten in the evening I was back here, I partly returned by underground railway. I had been lucky enough to collect some money for Mr. Jones.

At Petersham I told the congregation that they would hear bad English, but that when I spoke I thought of the man in the parable who said, "have patience with me and I will pay you everything." May God help me. At Mr. Obach's I saw the picture or rather the sketch by Boughton: "The Pilgrim's Progress." If you ever have the opportunity of reading Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," you will find it greatly worth while. I for my part am exceedingly fond of it. It is night time, I am still writing, copying something for the Gladwells at Lewisham, etc., one must strike the iron while it is hot, and the heart of man when it is burning within him. A firm handshake, kind regards to Mr. and Mrs. Tersteeg and to the families Roos, Hanebeek, van Stockum and Mauve. à Dieu, believe me,

Your most affectionate brother,

Vincent.

83

Dear Theo, Etten Dec. 31 1876.

Best wishes for the New Year, may it be a happy and prosperous one in all respects. How delightful it was to meet again, how beautiful it was that morning you left and how often we will remember that journey to Chaam;

Father preached a beautiful sermon this morning!

And now it is New Year's Eve, I wish you were here too. There is another thing I have to tell you. A few days ago Mr. Braat from Dordt[1] came to visit Uncle Vincent, and they talked about me, and uncle asked Mr. Braat if he had a place for me in his business, if I should want it. Mr. Braat thought so, and said that I must just come and talk it over. So I went there early yesterday morning, I thought it was a thing I could not let pass without seeing what it was. We arranged that I should come for a week after New Year to try it out, and after that we can see. There are many things that make it desirable, the being back in Holland near father and mother, and also near you and all the others. Then the salary would certainly be better than at Mr. Jones', and it is one's duty to think of that, because later in life a man needs more.

As to the religious work, I still do not give it up. Father is so broad-minded and so many-sided and I hope in whatever circumstances I may be something of that will unfold in me. The change will be that instead of teaching the boys, I shall work in a bookshop.

How often have we longed to be together, and how dreadful is the feeling of being far from each other in times of illness or care, as we felt it, for instance, during your illness, and then the feeling that want of necessary money might be an obstacle to coming together in time of need.

So it is quite possible that I go there.

Yesterday evening I was at Uncle Vincent's to tell him that I had gone at once to Dordt; it was a stormy night; you can imagine how beautiful the road to Prinsenhage was with the dark clouds with their silver linings.

I just entered for a minute the Catholic church where evening service was held. It was a beautiful sight, all those peasants, and those peasant women in their black dresses and white caps, and the church looked so cheerful in the evening light. You must tell it at once to Mr. Tersteeg that I go to Dordt for a week to try it. Wish him and Mrs. Tersteeg a happy New Year for me. I am writing in a great hurry, Anna and the girls went to Prinsenhage,

[1] Head of the publisher's firm, Blussé and v. Braam, at Dordrecht.

and father thought it better for me to go with them. Aunt came back with them in the carriage and I walked with Willem Carbentus. Well, lad, my dear brother, what happy days we all had together. Have a pleasant New Year's Eve, and believe me,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Soon more, à Dieu. If you write, address your letter to Dordt.

VINCENT'S SERMON

Psalm 119: 19. I am a stranger on the earth, hide not Thy commandments from me. It is an old belief and it is a good belief, that our life is a pilgrim's progress—that we are strangers on the earth, but that though this be so, yet we are not alone for our Father is with us. We are pilgrims, our life is a long walk or journey from earth to Heaven.

The beginning of this life is this: there is only one who remembereth no more her sorrow and her anguish for joy that a man is born into the world. She is our Mother. The end of our pilgrimage is the entering in Our Father's house, where are many mansions, where He has gone before us to prepare a place for us. The end of this life is what we call death—it is an hour in which words are spoken, things are seen and felt, that are kept in the secret chambers of the hearts of those who stand by,—it is so that all of us have such things in our hearts or forebodings of such things. There is sorrow in the hour when a man is born into the world, but also joy, deep and unspeakable, thankfulness so great that it reaches the highest Heavens. Yes the Angels of God, they smile, they hope and they rejoice when a man is born in the world. There is sorrow in the hour of death, but there is also joy unspeakable when it is the hour of death of one who has fought a good fight. There is one who has said: I am the resurrection and the life, if any man believe in Me though he were dead, yet shall he live. There was an apostle who heard a voice from heaven saying: Blessed are they that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labour and their works follow them. There is joy when a man is born in the world, but there is greater joy when a spirit has passed through great tribulation, when an angel is born in Heaven. Sorrow is better than joy—and even in mirth the heart is sad—and it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasts, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. Our nature is sorrowful, but for those who have learnt and are learning to look at Jesus Christ there is always reason to rejoice. It is a good word that of St. Paul: as being

sorrowful yet always rejoicing. For those who believe in Jesus Christ, there is no death or sorrow that is not mixed with hope—no despair—there is only a constantly being born again, a constantly going from darkness into light. They do not mourn as those who have no hope—Christian Faith makes life to evergreen life.

We are pilgrims on the earth and strangers—we come from afar and we are going far.—The journey of our life goes from the loving breast of our Mother on earth to the arms of our Father in heaven. Everything on earth changes—we have no abiding city here—it is the experience of everybody. That it is God's will that we should part with what is dearest on earth—we ourselves change in many respects, we are not what we once were, we shall not remain what we are now. From infancy we grow up to boys and girls—young men and women—and if God spares us and helps us, to husbands and wives, Fathers and Mothers in our turn, and then, slowly but surely the face that once had the early dew of morning, gets its wrinkles, the eyes that once beamed with youth and gladness speak of a sincere deep and earnest sadness, though they may keep the fire of Faith, Hope and Charity—though they may beam with God's spirit. The hair turns grey or we lose it—ah—indeed we only pass through the earth, we only pass through life, we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. The world passes and all its glory. Let our later days be nearer to Thee, and therefore better than these.

Yet we may not live on casually hour by hour—no we have a strife to strive and a fight to fight. What is it we must do: we must love God with all our strength, with all our might, with all our soul, we must love our neighbours as ourselves. These two commandments we must keep, and if we follow after these, if we are devoted to this, we are not alone, for our Father in Heaven is with us, helps us and guides us, gives us strength day by day, hour by hour, and so we can do all things through Christ who gives us might. We are strangers on the earth, hide not Thy commandments from us. Open Thou our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of Thy law. Teach us to do Thy will and influence our hearts that the love of Christ may constrain us and that we may be brought to do what we must do to be saved.

On the road from earth to Heaven
Do Thou guide us with Thine eye;
We are weak but Thou art mighty,
Hold us with Thy powerful hand.

Our life, we might compare it with a journey, we go from the place where we were born to a far-off haven. Our earlier life might be compared to sailing on a river, but very soon the waves become higher, the wind more violent, we are at sea almost before we are aware of it—and the prayer from the heart ariseth to God: Protect me o God, for my bark is so small and Thy sea is so great. The heart of man is very much like the sea, it has its storms, its tides and its depths; it has its pearls too. The heart that seeks for God and for a Godly life has more storms than any other. Let us see how a Psalmist describes a storm at sea. He must have felt the storm in his heart to describe it so. We read in the 107th Psalm: They that go down to the sea in ships that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth and raiseth up a stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to Heaven, they go down again to the depth, their soul melteth in them because of their trouble. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

He bringeth them into their desired haven.

Do we not feel this sometimes on the sea of our lives?

Does not every one of you feel with me the storms of life or their forebodings or their recollections?

And now let us read a description of another storm at sea in the New Testament, as we find it in the VIth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John in the 17th to the 21st verse. "And the disciples entered into a ship and went over the sea towards Capernaum. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea and drawing nigh unto the ship and they were afraid. Then they willingly received Him into the ship and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." You who have experienced the great storms of life, you over whom all the waves and all the billows of the Lord have gone—have you not heard, when your heart failed for fear, the beloved well-known voice with something in its tone that reminded you of the voice that charmed your childhood—the voice of Him whose name is Saviour and Prince of Peace, saying as it were to you personally, mind to you personally: "It is I, be not afraid." Fear not. Let not your heart be troubled. And we whose lives have been calm up till now, calm in comparison of what others have felt—let us not fear the storms of life, amidst the high waves of the sea and under the grey clouds of the sky we shall see Him approaching, for whom we have so

often longed and watched, Him we need so—and we shall hear His voice: It is I, be not afraid. And if after an hour or season of anguish or distress or great difficulty or pain or sorrow we hear Him ask us: "Dost thou love me?" Then let us say: Lord Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee. And let us keep that heart full of the love of Christ and may from thence issue a life which the love of Christ constraineth, Lord Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee; when we look back on our past we feel sometimes as if we did love Thee, for whatsoever we have loved, we loved in Thy name.

Have we not often felt as a widow and an orphan—in joy and prosperity as well and even more than under grief—because of the thought of Thee.

Truly our soul waiteth for Thee more than they that watch for the morning, our eyes are up unto Thee, O Thou who dwellest in Heaven. In our days too there can be such a thing as seeking the Lord.

What is it we ask of God—is it a great thing? Yes, it is a great thing, peace for the ground of our heart, rest for our soul—give us that one thing and then we want not much more, then we can do without many things, then can we suffer great things for Thy name's sake. We want to know that we are Thine and that Thou art ours, we want to be Thine—to be Christians—we want a Father, a Father's love and a Father's approval. May the experience of life make our eye single and fix it on Thee. May we grow better as we go on in life. We have spoken of the storms on the journey of life, but now let us speak of the calms and joys of Christian life. And yet, my dear friends, let us rather cling to the seasons of difficulty and work and sorrow, for the calms are often treacherous. The heart has its storms, has its seasons of drooping but also its calms and even its times of exaltation. There is a time of sighing and of praying, but there is also a time of answer to prayer. Weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning.

The heart that is fainting
May grow full to overflowing
And they that behold it
Shall wonder and know not
That God at its fountains
Far off has been raining.

My peace I leave with you—we saw how there is peace even in the storm. Thanks be to God, who has given us to be born

and to live in a Christian country. Has any one of us forgotten the golden hours of our early days at home, and since we left that home—for many of us have had to leave that home and to earn their living and to make their way in the world. Has He not brought us thus far, have we lacked anything, Lord we believe help Thou our unbelief. I still feel the rapture, the thrill of joy I felt when for the first time I cast a deep look in the lives of my Parents, when I felt by instinct how much they were Christians. And I still feel that feeling of eternal youth and enthusiasm wherewith I went to God, saying: "I will be a Christian too." Are we what we dreamt we should be? No, but still the sorrows of life, the multitude of things of daily life and of daily duties, so much more numerous than we expected, the tossing to and fro in the world, they have covered it over, but it is not dead, it sleepeth. The old eternal faith and love of Christ, it may sleep in us but it is not dead and God can revive it in us. But though to be born again to eternal life, to the life of Faith, Hope and Charity,—and to an evergreen life—to the life of a Christian and a Christian workman, be a gift of God, a work of God—and of God alone, yet let us put the hand to the plough on the field of our heart, let us cast out our net once more—let us try once more. God knows the intention of the spirit. God knows us better than we know ourselves, for He made us and not we ourselves. He knows of what things we have need. He knows what is good for us. May He give us His blessing on the seed of His word, that He has sown in our hearts. God helping us, we shall get through life. With every temptation he will give a way to escape.

Father we pray Thee not that Thou shouldest take us out of the world, but we pray Thee to keep us from evil. Give us neither poverty nor riches, feed us with bread convenient for us. And let Thy songs be our delight in the houses of our pilgrimage. God of our Fathers be our God: may their people be our people, their faith our faith. We are strangers on the earth, hide not Thy commandments from us, but may the love of Christ constrain us. Entreat us not to leave Thee or refrain from following after Thee. Thy people shall be our people. Thou shalt be our God.

Our life is a pilgrim's progress. I once saw a very beautiful picture: it was a landscape at evening. In the distance on the right-hand side a row of hills appeared blue in the evening mist. Above those hills the splendour of the sunset, the grey clouds with their linings of silver and gold and purple. The landscape is a plain or heath covered with grass and its yellow leaves, for it was in autumn. Through the landscape a road leads to a high

mountain far, far away, on the top of that mountain is a city whereon the setting sun casts a glory. On the road walks a pilgrim, staff in hand. He has been walking for a good long while already and he is very tired. And now he meets a woman, or figure in black, that makes one think of St. Paul's word: As being sorrowful yet always rejoicing. That Angel of God has been placed there to encourage the pilgrims and to answer their questions and the pilgrim asks her: "Does the road go uphill then all the way?"

And the answer is: "Yes to the very end."

And he asks again: "And will the journey take all day long?"[1]

And the answer is: "From morn till night my friend."

And the pilgrim goes on sorrowful yet always rejoicing—sorrowful because it is so far off and the road so long. Hopeful as he looks up to the eternal city far away, resplendent in the evening glow and he thinks of two old sayings that he heard long ago—the one is:

"Much strife must be striven
Much suffering must be suffered
Much prayer must be prayed
And then the end will be peace."

And the other is:

"The water comes up to the lips
But higher comes it not."

And he says: I shall be more and more tired but also nearer and nearer to Thee. Has not man a strife on earth? But there is a consolation from God in this life. An Angel of God comforting man—that is the Angel of Charity. Let us not forget her. And when each of us goes back to the daily things and daily duties, let us not forget that things are not what they seem, that God by the things of daily life teacheth us higher things, that our life is a pilgrim's progress, and that we are strangers on the earth, but that we have a God and father who preserveth strangers,—and that we are all brethren.

Amen.

And now the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us forever more.

Amen.

(Reading: Psalm XCI.)

[1] Wrongly quoted by Vincent from Christina Rossetti.

DORDRECHT

January 21 1877–April 30 1877

84

Dear Theo, Dordrecht Jan. 21 1877.

You will have expected a letter from me before; I am getting along pretty well at the store and am very busy, I go there at eight o'clock in the morning and leave at one o'clock at night, but I like it that way. I hope to go to Etten the eleventh of February, you know they celebrate father's birthday then, do you think you can come too? I intend to give father George Eliot's "Scenes from Clerical Life," if we give it together we could add "Adam Bede."

I wrote last Sunday to Mr. Jones and his wife, telling them that I was not coming back, and unintentionally the letter became rather long—out of the fullness of the heart—I wished them to remember me and asked them "to wrap my recollections in the cloak of charity."

The two prints: "Christus Consolator" and "Renumerator" which you gave me are hanging in my little room—I saw the pictures at the museum, and saw also Scheffer's Christ in Gethsemane, that is never to be forgotten; then there is a sketch of "Les Douleurs de la Guerre," and several drawings, and also a sketch of his studio, and, as you know, the portrait of his mother.

There are still other fine pictures; for instance, Achenbach and Schelfhout and Koekkoek and also a fine Allebé, an old man near the stove. Shall we look at them together some day?

The first Sunday I was here, I heard a sermon on "Behold, I make all things new." This morning I heard the Rev. Beversen in a little old church; there was Communion, and his text was: "If any thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

The window of my room looks out on a garden with pine trees and poplars, and the backs of old houses covered with ivy. "A

strange old plant is the ivy green," says Dickens. The view from my window can be so solemn and more or less gloomy, but you ought to see it with the morning sun on it, how different it is then. When I look at it I am often reminded of a letter from you, in which you speak of such a house, covered with ivy, do you remember ?

If you can afford it—if I can I will do the same—you must subscribe to the Catholic " Illustration" of this year, there are prints in it from London by Doré—the wharves on the Thames, Westminster, Whitechapel, the underground railway, etc. In the house where I live, lives also a schoolmaster.[1] Last Sunday and to-day too we took a fine walk together along the canals, and outside the town along the river, we also passed that spot where you were waiting for the steamer.

This evening when the sun was setting and reflected in the water and in the windows and cast a bright golden hue over everything, it looked just like a picture by Cuyp.

Write again as soon as you can, I shall have to do a lot of bookkeeping these days and will be very busy.

Give my kind regards to Roos, a handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

85

Dear Theo, [Undated.]

" Adam Bede " costs 2.60 fr., so I am sending you back 1.40 fr. Now I only hope they will enjoy the book at home, but they certainly will. Thanks for your letter that made me very happy; when we meet again we shall be as good friends as ever ; sometimes I feel so delighted that we are living again on the same soil and speaking the same language.

Last week we had an inundation here. Coming from the store at night, between twelve and one I walked around the cathedral, the wind blew high through the elm trees surrounding it, and the moon shone through the rain clouds and reflected in the canals, that were already filled to overflowing. That night at three o'clock everybody in the house of Ryken the grocer, where I live,

[1] Gorlitz

was busy carrying upstairs the things from the shop, as the water was standing three feet high in the house. There was no little noise and rumour, and in all the ground floors people were busy carrying things upstairs and a little boat came floating through the street.

In the morning at daybreak I saw a group of men at the other end of the street, who, one after the other, waded through the water to their warehouses. Much damage has been done; in the place where Mr. Braat keeps his paper, etc., the water penetrated also, not from inundation but by the heavy upward pressure from the ground.

Mr. Braat says that it will cost him a lot of money. We have been busy a day and a half carrying everything upstairs in another house. To do handwork for a day is rather an agreeable diversion, if only it had been for another reason. You ought to have seen the sunset that evening, the streets seemed of gold, like Cuyp used to paint them. I am longing for my trunk, which is on the way, especially so that I may have my prints again put up in my room. The only ones I have hanging now are "Christus Consolator," which you gave me and two English woodcuts of the "Pilgrims of Emmaus."

There may be a time in life when one is tired of everything and feels as if all one does is wrong, and there may be some truth in it—do you think this is a feeling one must try to forget and to banish, or is it "the longing for God," which one must not fear, but cherish to see if it may bring us some good? Is it "the longing for God" which leads us to make a choice which we never regret?

Last Sunday I was in the French church here; it is very solemn and impressive and has great charm; the text was: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." The end of the sermon was: "if I forget thee, O, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." After church I took alone a beautiful walk on a dyke along the mills, there was a splendid sky over the meadows, mirrored in the wet ditches. In other countries there are some curious things, for instance on the French coast I saw at Dieppe—the rocks were covered with green grass—and the sea and the sky, the harbour with the old boats were like a painting by Daubigny, with brown nets and sails, the little houses, among which are a few restaurants with white curtains and green pine branches in the window . . . the carts with white horses, harnessed with blue

halters and red tassels, the drivers with their blue blouses, the fishermen with their beards and oilskins, and the French women with pale faces, dark, often deep-set eyes, black dresses and white caps, and then too the London streets in the rain with the lanterns, and the night spent there on the steps of a little old grey church, as it happened to me this summer, after that excursion to Ramsgate, there are in other countries also some curious things . . . but as I walked last Sunday alone on that dyke, I thought how good it was to feel the Dutch soil under my feet, and I felt something like, "Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God," for I recalled all our childhood memories, how often we walked, in those last days of February with father to Rysbergen, and heard the lark over the black fields with young green corn, the radiant blue sky with the white clouds over it—and then the stony path with the beech trees—Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! or rather, Oh, Zundert! Oh, Zundert! Who knows if we shall not walk together near the sea some time this summer. We must always remain good friends, Theo, and believe in God and confide with a firm faith in Him, to whom all things are possible. My hearty congratulations upon this day:[1] it is already half-past two, so it is the eighth of February, may God spare our father a long time for us.

Father wrote that he had already seen starlings, do you remember how they used to sit on the church at Zundert? Here I have not seen any yet, but in the morning I have seen a great many rooks on the cathedral. Now spring will soon be here and then the larks will come too.

Good luck to you, my kind regards to Roos and especially to Mr. and Mrs. Tersteeg, a handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Tell Mr. Tersteeg not to be angry because we keep the drawing examples so long, they are for the High School, and thirty of them are already bound, but they want to select some for the Evening School too, and for that reason we must keep them still a few days; we will send them back as soon as possible.

[1] Their father's birthday.

Dear Theo, Dordrecht February 26 1877.

How quickly the hours flew by that we spent together; I think of the little road behind the station, where we saw the sun setting over the fields and the evening sky reflected in the ditches, where those old moss-grown trees are standing, and the little mill in the distance, and I feel I shall often walk there thinking of you.

Enclosed you will find that photograph "The Huguenot"; put it up in your little room. You know the story—how a young man, on the day preceding Bartholomew's night was warned by his fiancée, who knew what was going to happen that night,—how she wanted him to wear the sign of the Catholics, a white badge, around his arm. But he refused to do this; his Faith and his Duty were stronger than the love for his sweetheart.

I do not remember if I have already sent a poem by Longfellow,[1] of which I enclose a copy now. It has often given me pleasure and will do the same for you. I am glad that we saw the pictures of Scheffer together; that evening I went to see Mager,[2] who boards with the sexton of the Lutheran church, in a real old Dutch house. He has a nice room there; we sat chatting a long time together, he told about Menton and a Christmas he had celebrated there. Thanks for your coming here yesterday, and let us have as few secrets as possible from each other. Brothers should not have any.

I have been very busy to-day with a great many little nothings, but they belong to my duty; if one had no sense of duty, who would be able to collect his thoughts at all; the feeling of duty sanctifies everything and binds things together, making one large duty out of the many little ones.

Write to me soon if you arrived safely, and if the walk and journey have not been too much for you. I am longing for a letter from you, to hear also if you are going to Etten. A handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

[1] "The Light of the Stars."

[2] Nico Mager, at the time also employee in the book-store of Blussé and v. Braam.

This is perhaps a time in which you feel the want of, " a Psalm tone from the past, and a plaint from the cross."

" And I seem to hear in the stillness of the night
His voice so tender and so soft."

87

Dear Theo, Dordrecht Feb. 28 1877.

Write again soon when you have a moment's time, keep up your courage and be strong. Last night I copied something for you which I send herewith.[1]

Last night I left the store at one o'clock, and walked around the cathedral and then along the canals and past that old gate of the New church and then home. It had been snowing and everything was so quiet, there was only a little light here and there in the upper windows of some of the houses, and the black figure of the night watchman standing out against the snow. It was high tide and against the snow the canals and the ships looked very dark. It is sometimes very beautiful near those churches. The sky was grey and hazy and a pale moon was shining through.

I was thinking of you while walking there, and coming home I copied what I send you. You have the poems of de Genestet? Read them as often as you can. When I was in Paris, father sent me once, " When I was a Boy," and " There is no Priest who Explains Him."

I am writing to you in between my work, à Dieu, a handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

88

Dear Theo, Dordrecht March 16 1877.

Thanks for your letter, I will take care that you find a note from me in Amsterdam. I hope we shall see each other next Sunday and it will be delightful to be together again.

[1] A few Psalms and religious verses.

Many congratulations upon the birthday of Willemien,—what a nice little girl she is getting to be. From home she will have "The Wide, Wide World," and I am sending her "Christmas at the Pole," by Bungener.

I am glad that you are going on a business trip soon, that will be a nice change for you.

"I am so sad and so lonely," you say. "And yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me."

To think of Jesus in all places and circumstances, that is a good thing. How difficult is the life of the peasants in Brabant, that of Aerssen[1] for instance; from whence do they get their strength? And those poor women, what supports them in life? Don't you think it is, what the painter painted in his "Light of the World?"

You do not know how I yearn towards the Bible, I read it daily, but I should like to know it by heart, and to view life in the light of that word, which says "Thy word is a light for my path and a lamp for my feet." I hope and believe that my life will be modified somehow, and that this longing for Him will be satisfied; I too am sometimes sad and lonely, especially when I walk around a church or parsonage.

Let us keep courage and try to be patient and gentle. And do not mind being eccentric, and keep to yourself, make distinction between good and evil, even if you do not show it outwardly, do it for your own benefit.

"Do not depart from life without having shown openly your love for Christ in some way or other," Claudius says.

You have had an experience that can make you wise for a whole lifetime, do not forget it. "Nourris-moi du pain de mes larmes, vérité enseignez moi."

Hate sin, remember how father prayed every morning: "deliver us from evil, especially from the evil of sin," and well he knows.

I am longing for Sunday, hope you will have a good journey, work is always a good thing, "there is something good in all labour." I am busy every day until late at night, but I am glad it is so.

There are storks here already, but I have not yet heard any

[1] Labourer who worked in the parson's garden at Zundert.

larks. The sky is often stormy, and then one sees swarms of rooks and starlings.

The photograph, Mater Dolorosa, which you sent me, is hanging in my room, do you remember it was always hanging in father's study at Zundert?

Well, Theo, have a good time, we will see each other soon. I am longing to see the prints you write about, till Sunday, à Dieu, a handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

89

Dear Theo, Dordrecht March 22 1877.

I want you to have a letter from me on your journey; what a pleasant day we spent in Amsterdam, I stood watching the train that carried you off, until it was out of sight; we are such old friends already, how many walks have we taken together since the time at Zundert when at this season we went with father to hear the lark singing in the black fields with the young green corn.

In the morning I went with Uncle Cor to Uncle Stricker, and there had a long conversation about the subject you know ; in the evening at half-past six Uncle Cor saw me off, it was a beautiful evening and everything seemed so full of expression—the weather was quiet and there was a little fog hanging in the streets, as is usually the case in London. We also passed the flower market; it is a good thing to love flowers, and evergreens, and fir trees, and hedges of hawthorn, they were with us from the very beginning. I wrote a letter home to tell them what we did in Amsterdam, and the things we talked over.

Coming home I found a letter from Etten. Father was not well last Sunday, and the Rev. Kam preached for him; I know his heart is burning within him that something may happen to enable me to follow him in his profession, father always expected it from me, oh, that it may happen and God's blessing rest upon it. In writing to you what my intentions are, my thoughts become more clear and definite. In the first place I think of the word: "It is my portion to keep Thy word," I have such a longing to possess the treasure of the Bible, to study thoroughly and lovingly all those

old stories, and especially to find out what is known about Christ. —In our family, which is a Christian family in the full sense of the word, there has always been, as far as one can remember, from generation to generation, one who preached the Gospel. Why should not a member of that family feel himself called to that service now, and why shouldn't he have reason to believe that he may and must declare his intentions and look for the means to reach that goal. It is my fervent prayer and desire that the spirit of my father and grandfather may rest upon me, and that it may be given me to become a Christian and a Christian labourer, that my life may resemble more and more the lives of those named above, for behold the old wine is good and I do not desire a new one.

Theo, boy, brother whom I love, I have such a fervent longing for it, but how can I reach it! If I were only through with this long and difficult study to become a preacher of the Gospel.

Good luck on your journey and write soon, a firm handshake, à Dieu, always

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Try to be in Etten at Easter, it will be nice to be together again.

90

Dear Theo, [Undated.]

Thanks for your letter which I received yesterday; having some spare time I answer it to-day.

I remembered that when we were at the museum van der Hoop, we spoke about the book of Burger, so I send it to you by post, you will find in it for your collection another wood-cut after Doré: Judith and Holophernes, and one after Brion. Keep up your collection and you will get a fine one in time. Accept my small contribution to it, I long so much to keep in touch with you through these little things, whenever I enter my little room the prints on the wall remind me of you.

The love between brothers is a strong support through life, that is an old truth, let us look for that support, may experience

strengthen the bond between us, and let us be true and outspoken toward each other, let there be no secrets—as it is now.

Thanks for your last letter. "It is not yet over," you say,—no that would not be possible. Your heart will want to confide and unbosom itself,—your mind will be divided—she or my father—I think our father loves you more than she does—that his love is of greater value, it is fine gold those words:

The child puts his faith in his father,
The father is worthy of faith,
For who is nearer than the father
In the kingdom of God or on Earth.
(Dutch Hymn.)

Go there once again, if it is getting too hard for you.

This week I received a letter from Uncle Vincent, who writes that he does not think it of any use to carry on the correspondence, because in this case he cannot be of any assistance to me at all. . . . There also came a letter from Mr. Gladwell, in which he wrote about Harry, . . . who must have suffered agonies, and who must have been hard pressed to make him act as he has done. To-day Mr. Gorlitz has been in Etten to speak to father about the teacher's vacancy at de Leur.[1] I heartily hope he will get it. To-day I went to the morning service, the sermon was very beautiful, about Jesus appearing to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias. John xxi.

Enclosed a few poems by Uhland that struck me.

Write to me soon my boy, kind regards to Roos, a handshake from

Your loving brother,
Vincent.

Enclosed are flowers from Etten brought by Gorlitz.

91

Dear Theo, Etten April 3 1877.

I must send you a letter again, as you see I write you from Etten. Yesterday morning I received a letter from home, in which

[1] Little village near Etten.

father wrote to me that Aerssen was dying, and that he had been to see him, as Aerssen had expressed the wish that father should visit him.

When I heard that, my heart was drawn so strongly towards Zundert that I longed to go there also.

Saturday night I took the last train from Dordrecht to Oudenbosch, and walked from there to Zundert. It was so beautiful on the heath; though it was dark one could distinguish the heath, and the pine woods, and moors extending far and wide, it reminded me of the print by Bodmer, that hangs in father's study. The sky was overcast, but the evening star was shining through the clouds, and now and then more stars appeared:—It was very early when I arrived at the churchyard in Zundert, where everything was so quiet, I went over all the dear old spots, and the little paths, and awaited the sunrise there. You know the story of the Resurrection, everything reminded me of it that morning, in the quiet graveyard.—From Aerssen and Mientje I heard, as soon as they had got up, that their father had died that night, oh! they were so grieved, and their hearts were so full, Hein came also very early in the morning. I was glad to be with them, and I felt with them for I too had loved the man.

The aunts send you their love, and Jan Doome too whom I also visited. From there I walked with Hein to Rysbergen, and spent about an hour in the house, and we read the Bible together. Woutje Prins[1] had also sat up with Aerssen three nights, and had been with him to the last. His passing away was peaceful.

I shall never forget that noble head lying on the pillow, it showed signs of suffering, but wore an expression of peace and holiness. Oh! it was so beautiful, to me it was characteristic of all the peculiar charm of the country and the life of the Brabant people. And they were all talking about father, how good he had always been to them, and how much these two had loved each other.

Then I walked with Hein Aerssen to Etten, and am home now, ready to start for Dordrecht early to-morrow morning.

Good-bye brother, it is mail time, a firm handshake and kind regards to all, from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

[1] The old nurse at Zundert.

Dear Theo, (April 16 1877.)

Thanks for your letter, be strong and He will strengthen your heart. To-day I received a long letter from home, in which father asked me if we could arrange to go together to Amsterdam next Sunday, to visit Uncle Cor. If you agree I will arrive at the Hague Saturday night at eleven o'clock, and we can go on to Amsterdam by the first train the next morning.

I think we had better do so, father seems to have set his heart upon it, and it will be nice to spend another Sunday together. Can I stay over night with you—otherwise I go to a hotel. Write me a post card if it is all right, let us keep close together.

It is already late, this afternoon I took a long walk, because I felt I needed it, first around the cathedral, then past the New church, and then along the dyke, where the mills are that one sees in the distance as one walks near the station. There is so much sentiment in this peculiar landscape and surrounding, it seems to say, " Be of good courage, fear not."

Oh! might I be shown the way to devote my life more than is possible at present, to the service of God, and the gospel. I keep praying for it and I think I shall be heard, I say it in all humility. Humanly speaking, one would say it cannot happen, but when I think seriously about it and penetrate under the surface of what is impossible to man, then my soul is in communion with God, for it is possible to Him, who speaketh and it is; who commandeth and it stands, and stands firm.

Oh! Theo, Theo boy, if I might only succeed in this, if that heavy depression because everything I undertook failed, that torrent of reproaches which I have heard and felt, if it might be taken from me, and if there might be given to me, both the opportunity and the strength needed to come to full development and to persevere in that course for which my father and I would thank the Lord so fervently. A handshake and kind regards to Roos,

Ever your loving brother,

Vincent.

Dear Theo, Dordrecht April 23 1877.

I received your letter from the 21st of April, thanks for writing so soon, that letter gave me a feeling of joy, like the woman must have felt who found her mite, for you tell me that the little writing-desk of Aunt Koos, with the letters of father and mother, has been found by Mrs. Roos, at the spring cleaning. How carefully and anxiously I looked for it last year, fancying I had taken it with me to England, and that I had left it in one of the houses where I lived in London.—I am so glad it is found, I am so thankful for it, keep it for me for the present; in Amsterdam when I have started[1] I shall want it. I remember now quite well I left it with Roos on leaving for England, because there was not much room in my trunk, and also because I thought it would be safer there, than to take it with me abroad.

It seems to me a new proof and a hint,—I have already observed more of them lately—that everything will go all right with me, that I shall succeed in the thing I so fondly desire;—something of the old faith grows in me, that my thoughts will be confirmed, and my spirit will be renewed and the soul restored to the old faith. It will be a choice for my whole life!

Do you also fix your heart and mind upon a good thing and a good work, and pray for it to the Lord.

Uncle Jan has been in Etten, and has said that my little room is already waiting for me,—Mr. Braat has somebody in view for my place, so in May I shall probably be able to put a hand to the plough.

In that little room the prints will hang that you gave me, and so they will daily remind me of you.

This morning I heard a beautiful sermon by the Rev. Keller van Hoorn; this afternoon Gorlitz, Mager, ten Broek and I were in the museum to see the pictures by Scheffer,—how beautiful they are. Did I already tell you that Gorlitz has been to Etten to apply for the position of teacher at de Leur?

He came back full of everything he had seen there. Father's sermon was about Jacob who slept in the field at Bethel, and it had touched him so.

[1] He hints at his plan to study theology in Amsterdam.

I wish he could get that place, then he would be able to marry soon.

Last week I had a letter from Harry Gladwell, he is in dangerous surroundings,—the bird-catchers there are numerous and cunning. I hope to hear more of it soon, and we will talk it over some time.

About Taine's life I know very little, I suppose he has travelled much in France, Italy, England, and also in Holland, one would gather that from his writings. He surely is an artist.—The first volume by Burger: "Musées" I still have.

Well, Theo I hope you have a good Sunday to-day. If I go to Amsterdam, I hope to see you before.

I suppose that for a "sower of God's word" as I hope to be, as well as for a sower of the seed on the fields, each day will bring enough of its own evil—and the earth will produce many thorns and thistles—let us continue to help each other, and ask for brotherly love.

Adieu, give my regards to Roos, and receive a handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

It is raining here to-day, and one could almost fancy being in London. When I go to post this letter I hope to walk down that little path behind the station, where we walked together.

94

Dear Theo, Dordrecht April 30 1877.

Many happy returns of the day, I hope you will have a good time, and great prosperity in the year that is to come. Time flies and the days pass quickly—still something must remain, and the past is not quite lost,—we may become richer and firmer of mind, of character, of heart, we may become richer in God, we may become richer in the fine gold of life, the love for each other, and the feeling, "and yet I am not alone as the Father is with me."

I hope to see you soon, for when I go to Amsterdam I intend to stay some time at the Hague, but do not tell this to anybody, as I do it especially to be with you. Next Wednesday I go to Etten to stay there for a few days, and then the hand to the plough.

I wish you had been here yesterday; in the morning I heard in the French church, the farewell sermon of the Rev. Hooyer, the

church was crowded, he spoke with fire and enthusiasm, the sight of that grave distinguished community struck me, the whole had a great serious feeling. In the afternoon I was in the Cathedral to hear the Rev. Keller van Hoorn, his text was, "Our Father"; in the evening I heard the Rev. Greeff, whom I also heard the first Sunday night I was here in Dordt. After church I walked along the path behind the station where we walked together, my thoughts were full of you, and I wished we might be together,—and I walked on to the churchyard, at the end of a black cinder path through the meadows, they looked so beautiful in the twilight. The churchyard reminds me of that drawing by Apol in "Eigen Haard,"[1] there is a ditch around it and there is a house surrounded by pine trees, where last night the light was shining kindly through the windows,—it is an old house, that looks like a parsonage.

Much good may be in store for us in the future, let us learn to repeat with father "I never despair," and with Uncle Jan, "the devil is never so black but you can look him in the face."

Write soon again, next Wednesday I shall be in Etten. Do you have de Plancy: "Légendes des Artistes," with wood cuts after Rochussené I hope to bring that for you. Between times I have worked through the whole story of Christ, from a catechism book of Uncle Stricker's and copied the texts; they reminded me of so many pictures by Rembrandt and others.—I hope and believe I will not repent of the choice I made to try and become a Christian and a Christian worker. Yes, all things from the past may contribute to it; through the acquaintance with cities such as London and Paris, and the life in houses like the schools at Ramsgate and Isleworth, one is strongly drawn and attached to many things and books from the Bible, like for instance the Acts of the Apostles. The knowledge of and the love for the work and life of men like Jules Breton, Millet, Jacque, Rembrandt, Bosboom and so many others, may become a source of new thoughts. What a resemblance there is between the work and life of father and that of those men; I value that of father still higher. May God help us boy. A handshake and once more the very best wishes from

Your loving brother,

Kind regards to the Roos family. Vincent.

[1] Dutch magazine.

AMSTERDAM

9TH MAY 1877–JULY 1878

Vincent's wish is now fulfilled—he will begin his study in theology, but in order to be admitted to the University he must first pass a State examination which demands a preparatory study of at least two years. The whole family is inclined to assist the young man in his plans. He will board with Uncle Jan van Gogh, then the Commandant of the Navy Yard—he was a widower and his children were all grown up and had left home, so he could easily accommodate his young nephew. Uncle Stricker would superintend the study, and procured him lessons from Mendes da Costa, the well-known teacher in classical languages. In the art gallery of Uncle Cor in the Leidschestraat he could now and then indulge his love for pictures to his heart's content.

He begins full of courage—but father and mother question, with anxiety, if one who has never been used to regular study, can acquire this habit, when in his twenty-fourth year. The result has proved negative in this case. But Vincent tries hard, and for a whole year struggled with his Latin exercises, it becomes too much for him at last; he longs for more practical work; in the summer of '78 he gives up the study at Amsterdam, with his parents' permission, and returns to the parsonage at Etten.

95

Dear Theo, Amsterdam May 19 1877.

What a happy day we spent together, which we will not easily forget. I will see that you find a letter on your return from Etten, you must have had a good time there, write me soon how you spent the day.

By the same mail I send you something for your collection, namely a lithograph after J. Maris, which might be called: A poor in spirit—in the Kingdom of God, and a lithograph after Mollinger, I never saw it before, did you?

A Jewish bookseller who procures me the Latin and Greek books I want, had a large number of prints and I could choose from them very cheaply, thirteen pieces for 70 cents, I took some for my little room, to give it the right atmosphere, for that is necessary to get new thoughts and new ideas. I will tell you what they are, then you will know how my room looks, and what is hanging there. One after Jamin (that hangs also in your room), one after M. Maris, that little boy that goes to school, five after Bosboom, van der

Maaten's Funeral procession through the cornfields, Israëls, poor man on a snowy winter road, and Ostade, studio. Then there is still an Allebé, a little old woman, who on a winter morning, when the street is covered with snow, is carrying her hot water and hot coals. I sent that last one to Cor for his birthday.

The Jew had some finer ones still, but I could not afford any more, and though I like to put up some in my room, I am not going to make a collection.

Yesterday Uncle Cor sent me a lot of old paper, like the page on which I write to you now, isn't that delightful to write my exercises on ?

I have a lot of work to do, and it is not very easy, but patience will help me through, I hope to remember the ivy, " which stealeth on though he wears no wings," as the ivy creeps along the walls, so the pen must crawl over the paper.

Every day I take a long walk, lately I came through a very nice part of the town, I went along the Buitenkant to the Dutch Railroad station, there I saw men working with sand-carts near the " Y ",[1] and I passed through many narrow streets with gardens full of ivy. It reminded me somehow of Ramsgate.

Near the station I turned to the left, where all the mills are, along a canal with elm trees, everything there reminds one of the etchings by Rembrandt.

One of these days I shall begin the Universal History from the book of Streckfuss, or rather I have begun it already.

It is not an easy job, but going on step by step and doing well, what I have to do, must lead to a good result, that is my firm hope. But it will take time; it is what everybody says, and not only Corot: " il n'a fallu pour cela que quarante ans de travail, de pensée et d'attention " (it only took forty years of hard work and of thought and attention). For the work of men like father, Uncle Stricker, and so many others, a great deal of study is needed, just as for painting.

But sometimes a man says to himself; how shall I ever arrive!

How is Mrs. Tersteeg, and have you been to see Mauve? Keep courage, there may be good days in store for us, if God will grant us life and give His blessing on what we undertake. Will you

[1] River near Amsterdam.

ever hear me preach in some little church, God grant it and I believe that He will do so.

Will you come again some Sunday to my little study, and shall we go again together to the little church in Scheveningen, I hope so.

My kind regards to the Roos family, a handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Yesterday I saw a portrait of Michelet and looked at it attentively and thought of, "sa vie d'encre et de papier" (his life of ink and paper). At night I am tired and I cannot get up as early as I wish, but I will get over that, and hope to force myself to it.

96

Dear Theo, Amsterdam May 21 1877.

Thanks for your letter and for the church certificate. It is a pity you were not in Etten for Easter, I heartily hope you will be able to go another Sunday. Could you get that certificate easily? Thanks for the trouble.

Yesterday I was at the early morning service and heard a sermon about, "I shall for ever be at strife with man,"[1] how after a time of disappointment and grief there can come a time in life when our dearest longings and wishes may be fulfilled. At ten o'clock in the morning I heard Uncle Stricker speak on Acts ii. 1–4. A very fine, hearty, warm sermon; this morning I am going to hear Uncle again, I must go now, and when I come back I will write you what the text was.

It is rainy weather to-day and it was a long walk along the Buitenkant to the North church. The city near the Schreyerstoren, where there is a view of the Y, looked like a picture of J. Maris. The text was Corinthians i. 12–13: "For we also are baptized by one spirit to one body."

There are many beautiful churches here. This week I walked to the Zuider Zee, along the dyke to Zeeburg, one passes the Jewish churchyard, and I visited it. It is very simple, full of old headstones with Hebrew inscriptions, and elderberry trees, and covered here and there with high dark green grass Yesterday

[1] Vincent probably means the text "My Spirit will not always strive with man."

(Sunday) afternoon I went with Uncle Jan to Baarn,[1] how beautiful it is there, we walked through the avenues of pine trees and beeches in the wood, and saw the sun set behind a coppice. You can imagine how beautiful the wharf is and the docks and the banks of the Y in the evening, for instance yesterday when we came home, there is then such a delightful smell of tar, that reminds one of the pine woods.

Do you know that old English engraving, "The Vicar's Daughter," that hangs at Uncle Cor's, I was struck by it yesterday, look at it well when you come to Baarn some day.

The sentiment of it reminds one of: "Die Abendglocke." This morning I saw in church a little old woman, probably one who provides foot-stoves in church, who reminded me so much of that etching by Rembrandt, a woman who has been reading the Bible and has fallen asleep with her head in her hand.

Ch. Blanc writes so beautifully and with so much feeling about it and I think Michelet also in his "il n'y a point de vieille femme," (women are never old). The poem by de Genestet, "The end of her path in life is lonely," also reminds me of it.

Do you think we too shall be at the evening of our life before we know it, as it were—if we feel the days are flying past us faster and faster, it sometimes does me good to believe so and to remember that, "l'homme s'agite et Dieu le mène" (man proposes and God Disposes).

Did you have to go to the office on Easter morning? I hope you still had a good time.

May 22.

Last night I was at Uncle Stricker's where it was very pleasant, I came home after eleven and sat down to write until twelve; how I wish we could visit here and there together, I wish you had been with us last night. Write soon if you have a moment's time.

I have a lot of work to do this morning, I see that it is not easy, and it will get more and more difficult, but still I have the firm hope to succeed and I am also convinced that by practice the habit of study will come to me, and that my work will improve, and become more firmly grounded. Already I have begun to study the Bible, but only at night when the day's work is done, or early

[1] Where Uncle Cor had his country seat.

in the morning—after all that is the principal thing—though it is my duty to devote myself to the other study and I am doing so. Yesterday at Stricker's they asked me to tell about London and Paris and when I do so, I see it all again before me; all that past time can be of help in my work at present, I love so many things over there, and oh! it was so wherever I lived; how I feel it when I walk through the streets of the Hague, or for instance in Zundert; I shall never forget that last visit there. Before I went to Stricker's I just stepped in the Trippenhuis[1] to look at some of the pictures. You know which.

Well Theo, give my regards to the friends you may meet, write soon, be as happy as possible, a firm handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent

97

Dear Theo, Amsterdam May 28 1877.

. . . . . .

To-day was a stormy day, when I went this morning to my lesson I stood on the bridge looking towards the Zuider Zee, there was a white streak at the horizon (against which the long line of houses with the East church stood out), over it hung dark grey clouds from which in the distance the slanting rain came pouring down.

Yesterday Uncle Jan went to Leyden, so I was alone for the day, in the morning I went to the East church, in the afternoon I walked towards the seaside, and the rest of the day I have been working. The work does not come to me so easily and quickly as I could wish, but practice makes perfect I hope, only if I could, I should like to skip a few years, my boy. I think one only gets some peace after one has accomplished a few years of study and feels one is getting on.

This morning I was in Uncle Stricker's study, it is a beautiful room, and there hangs a portrait of Calvin by Ary Scheffer, yet I should like to see more prints on the wall there. Last week I read Gen. xxiii., the burial of Sarah in the field that Abraham bought to

[1] The old museum at Amsterdam.

bury her there in the cave of Machpelah, and involuntarily I made a little drawing of how the place appeared to me, it is not worth much but I enclose it herewith. Yesterday I had a good letter from home and answered it to-day, I hope you will write me soon, I am longing for it.

Just now the men from the wharf are going home, it is such a curious sight, I hear them already early in the morning, I think there are about 3,000 of them, the sound of their footsteps is like the roaring of the sea. This morning I bought from a Jew "Tobias" after Rembrandt, a small engraving for 6 cents.

Uncle Jan sends you his compliments.

How is Mrs. Tersteeg, I am also longing to hear if you have been at Mauve's. In a few days Aunt Mina goes to Etten, that is nice for mother. Father wrote to me that the church had been whitewashed and the organ painted. Yesterday he baptized three children. L—— is not yet better and the wife of W. v. Eeklen is also very ill. Have you heard that Uncle Vincent has bronchitis again, and it seems to be very bad, it is lucky that he is not abroad, and is in his own house, and that father and mother can visit him almost daily.

Well boy, be as happy as you can, my compliments to the Roos family, write soon, with a firm handshake,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

98

Dear Theo, Amsterdam May 30 1877.

Thanks for your letter that arrived to-day, I am very busy and write in a hurry. I gave your letter to Uncle Jan, he sends you his compliments and thanks for it.

There was a sentence in your letter that struck me, "I wish I were far away from everything, I am the cause of all, and bring only sorrow to everybody, I alone have brought all this misery on myself and others." These words struck me because that same feeling, just the same, not more nor less, is also on my conscience.

When I think of the past,—when I think of the future of almost invincible difficulties, of much and difficult work, which I

do not like, which I, or rather my evil self, would like to shirk; when I think the eyes of so many are fixed on me,—who will know where the fault is, if I do not succeed, who will not make me trivial reproaches, but as they are well tried and trained in everything that is right and virtuous and fine gold, they will say, as it were by the expression of their faces: we have helped you and have been a light unto you,—we have done for you what we could, have you tried honestly? what is now our reward and the fruit of our labour? See! when I think of all this, and of so many other things like it, too numerous to name them all, of all the difficulties and cares that do not grow less when we advance in life, of sorrow, of disappointment, of the fear of failure, of disgrace,—then I also have the longing,—I wish I were far away from everything!

And yet I go on, but prudently and hoping to have the strength of resisting those things, so that I shall know what to answer to those reproaches that threaten me, and believing that notwithstanding everything that seems against me, I yet shall reach the aim I am striving for, and if God wills it, shall find favour in the eyes of some I love and in the eyes of those that will come after me.

There is written: "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees," and when the disciples had worked all night and had not caught any fish, they were told "go out into the deep and cast your nets again into the sea."

My head is sometimes heavy and often it burns and my thoughts are confused,—I don't see how I shall ever get that difficult and extensive study into it—to get used to and persevere in simple regular study after all those emotional years is not always easy. And yet I go on; if we are tired isn't it then because we have already walked a long way, and if it is true that man has his battle to fight on earth, is not then the feeling of weariness and the burning of the head a sign that we have been struggling? When we are working at a difficult task and strive after a good thing we fight a righteous battle, the direct reward of which is that we are kept from much evil.

And God sees the trouble and the sorrow and He can help in spite of all. The faith in God is firm in me—it is no imagination no idle faith—but it is so, it is true, there is a God who is alive and He is with our parents and *His eye is also upon us*, and I am sure

He plans our life and we do not quite belong to ourselves as it were —and this God is no other than Christ of whom we read in our Bible and Whose word and history is also deep in our heart. If I had only given all my strength to it before, yes, I should have been further now,—but even now He will be a strong support, and it is in His power to make our lives bearable, to keep us from evil, to let all things contribute towards a good end, to make our end peaceful.

There is much evil in the world and in ourselves, terrible things, and one does not need to be far advanced in life, to be in fear of much and to feel the need of a firm faith in life hereafter, and to know that without faith in God one cannot live, one cannot bear it.—But with that faith one can go on for a long time.

When I was standing beside the corpse of Aerssen the calmness and dignity and solemn silence of death contrasted with us living people to such an extent, that we all felt the truth of what his daughter said in her simplicity: "he is freed from the burden of life, which we have to carry on still." And yet we are so much attached to the old life, because next to our despondent moods we have our happy moments, when heart and soul rejoice, like the lark that cannot keep from singing in the morning, even though the soul sometimes sinks within us and is full of fears. And the memories of all we have loved, stay and come back to us in the evening of our life. They are not dead but they sleep, and it is well to gather a treasure of them.

A handshake and write soon to

Your loving brother,

Vincent

99

Dear Theo, Amsterdam May 31 1877.

It is already late and everyone is asleep, but I feel that I must write you once more.

In your last letter you wrote that you think of going to another city, if possible, and you mention London or Paris,—that may be a good thing. Oh! lad, how I love those two cities, that is to say I love many things one meets and sees there, but there are many

things that I hate too, at least do not love as much as the hedges of hawthorn, and the green grass and the little grey churches.—It is not a bad idea of yours. But know one thing,—we both must try and live through the time between now and the age of thirty years, and beware of sin,—we are put in the rank and file of life, well, we must fight a good battle and we must become men, that we are not yet, neither of us,—there is something greater in the future, my conscience tells me so, we are not what other people are, well, but we may try to become like them, you know what I desire to be. If I may become a clergyman and fill that position so that my work resembles that of our father, then I shall thank God. . . . Whatever you wish for yourself, hold firm to the thought of Christ, and keep His commandments. Faith can make us, "Sorrowful but always rejoicing," and then we need not complain that "Youth flies with the maturing of our strength." Be as happy as possible, write soon again, compliments to the family Roos and other acquaintances you may meet, a handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

100

Dear Theo, Amsterdam June 4 1877.

You remember that night at Dordrecht when we walked together through the town, around the cathedral and through so many streets, and along the canals in which the old houses and the lights from the windows were reflected? You spoke then about the description of a day in London by Theophile Gautier, the coachman of a wedding party before the door of a church on a stormy foggy day. I saw it all before me, but if that struck you then, you will also appreciate the pages[1] I enclose, I read them on a very stormy day last week; it was in the evening when the sunset threw a ruddy glow on the grey evening clouds, against which the masts of the ships and the row of old houses and trees stood out, and everything was reflected in the water, and the sky threw a strange light on the black earth, on the green grass with daisies and

[1] Lamartine's "Cromwell." Vincent copies three full pages which have not been reprinted here.

buttercups, and on the bushes of white and lavender lilacs, and the elderberry bushes of the garden in the Yard.

In London I had read that book of Lamartine's and I was very much struck by it, and especially the last pages made again a deep impression upon me.

Tell me what you think about it. Those places that are mentioned there, Hampton Court with its Avenues of linden trees full of rookeries, White Hall overgrown with ivy at the back, and the square, bordering St. James' Park where one sees Westminster Abbey, I see it all before me, and the weather and the gloomy atmosphere of it all, " cela m'empêche de dormir " (it keeps me from sleeping).

Were you in Etten Sunday, I heartily hope so and that you had a pleasant day; I understood this from a sentence in the last letter from Etten; " we expect Theo probably next Sunday."

. . . . . .

I am very busy so à Dieu, perhaps I will continue this letter tonight, a handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

To-day I passed the flower market on the Singel, I saw something very pretty there. A peasant was standing with a whole lot of pots, all kinds of flowers and plants, behind it was ivy and between it all his little girl was sitting, a child like Maris would have painted, so simple in her little black bonnet, and with a pair of bright and smiling eyes; she was knitting, the man praised his ware and if I could have spared the money I should have liked only too well to buy some, and he said pointing unintentionally also at his little daughter, " Doesn't it look pretty? "

June 5th.

Yesterday night I was at Stricker's; M. M. who is engaged to Paul was also there, she is a girl that reminds me of Ellen in " The Wide Wide World." Her father was a very clever clergyman, an extraordinary man, an intimate friend of Uncle Stricker's. We walked along the Buitenkant and the sand banks near the East railroad. I cannot describe to you how beautiful it was there in the twilight. Rembrandt, Michel and others have sometimes

painted it, the ground dark, the sky still lit by the glow of the setting sun, the row of houses and steeples against it, lights in the windows everywhere, and the whole mirrored in the water. And the people and the carriages like little black figures, such as one sees sometimes in a Rembrandt. And we were so impressed by the beauty of it that we began to talk about many things.

I was sitting up writing until late last night, and again early this morning, it was such beautiful weather. At night there is also a beautiful view on the Yard, where everything is dead quiet then, and the lamps are burning and the starlit sky over it all.

"When all sounds cease, God's voice is heard under the stars."

Write to me soon and tell me if that part about Cromwell is not taken from the very heart of London.

101

Dear Theo, Amsterdam June 12 1877.

I received your letter from the 7th of June, and was glad to learn from it that you had been in Etten, and spent a nice Sunday there, it was fine that father and little brother accompanied you back to Dordrecht. And then you tell me that you spoke with father and mother about your plans for the future, when I read that my heart opened to you; I think you are quite right. Launch out into the deep. But what I hope is only this,—that you will go to London before you see Paris. But we must calmly wait how things will turn out. I have loved so many things in these two cities, I often recall them with tender melancholy and I could almost wish to go back there with you; when I occupy a small place in that large Dutch Protestant church, those recollections will furnish many a topic for sermons; let us go on in faith and confidence, you and I, who knows if we will not shake hands one day, as I remember father and Uncle Jan did one time in the little Zundert church when Uncle returned from his journey, and many things had happened in both their lives, and now they felt, as it were, firm ground under their feet.

As soon as you hear any particulars about this, be sure and write it at once, I hope before you go we shall spend some quiet hours together. Though there does not seem an immediate chance, yet

such a thing can come up all at once. But I repeat, brother, my heart opens when I think of you, I think it is a very fine plan,—my past quite revives when I think of your future. "See I make all things new," will perhaps soon be also your experience.

Blessings on you in these days, give a last good look at the things around you, and do not forget them,—"walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it" as the Bible says.

I am very busy every day, so time passes quickly and the days are almost too short, even when I stretch them a little, I have such a great longing to make progress, and also to know the Bible well and thoroughly, and also to know many things like that which I copied for you about Cromwell. "Not a day without a line;" by writing, reading, working and practising daily, perseverance will lead me to a good end.

This week I visited the cemetery here outside the Muiderpoort, there is a little wood in front of it, where it is very beautiful, especially in the evening, when the sun shines through the leaves; there are many beautiful graves and all kinds of evergreens, and roses and forget-me-nots are blooming there; I also walked again to the Zuider Zee, that is 40 minutes from here, along a dyke from which one sees all around meadows and farms, that always remind me of the etchings by Rembrandt. Amsterdam is a beautiful city, to-day I saw again a little corner for Thijs Maris or Allebé to paint, namely houses behind the East church on a little square; I had to speak to the sexton about Uncle's seat in church, and I was in his house, next door there lived a cobbler, etc.; but you will find *it* everywhere, the world is full of it. That sexton reminded me of a woodcut of Rethel I think, I suppose you know it too, "Der Tod als Freund" (Death as a friend). That image has always struck me, when I was in London one could see it in the show windows of almost every art-shop. There is a sequel to it: "The Cholera in Paris," and by Rethel is also the "Dance of Death."

Sunday morning I heard the Rev. Laurillard, at the early morning service, he spoke about, "Jesus walked in the newly sown field." He made a deep impression upon me,—in that sermon he spoke also about the parable of the sower, and about, "the man who should cast seed into the ground and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and he knoweth not how;" he also mentioned the "Funeral Procession through the Corn-

field," by van der Maaten. The sun was shining through the windows, there were not many people in the church, chiefly workmen and women. Later that morning I heard Uncle Stricker in the East church on, "praise not from men but from God," also referring to the death of the Queen. This morning at a quarter to five there was a terrible thunderstorm here, shortly after in the pouring rain the first gang of workmen came through the gates of the Yard. I got up and went out into the Yard and took a few copybooks with me to the summer-house, and have been sitting reading there, and looking out over the whole Yard and dock; the poplars and elderberry and other bushes, were bowed down by the heavy storm, and the rain poured down on the piles of wood and on the deck of the ships; boats and a little steamer were sailing to and fro, and in the distance, near the village across the Y one saw the swiftly moving brown sails, and the houses and trees from the Buitenkant and the churches more vividly coloured. Again and again one heard the thunder and saw the lightning, and the sky was like that of a picture by Ruysdael, and the seagulls were skimming the water.

It was a grand sight and a real relief after the oppressive heat of yesterday. It has quite refreshed me, for I felt very tired when I went upstairs last night.

I paid a visit yesterday to the Rev. and Mrs. Meyes because father had asked me to, and I had tea with them.

When I came there the Reverend was taking his nap and I was requested to come back in half an hour, and I did so, fortunately I had the little book by Lamennais in my pocket, and read it walking under the trees along the canals, where the evening sun was mirrored in the dark water. Then I went back there again, and they reminded me of "Winter" by Thorwaldsen. Father and mother remind me still more of it, but I repeat they did so too.

The days fly by, I am four years older than you are, and probably they seem to go more swiftly for me than for you, but I fight against it by stretching them a little at morning and evening.

Will you write soon? It is a pity that Mager does not come now after all. The weather has cleared, and the sky is blue and the sun is shining and the birds are singing, there are many of them in the Yard, of all kinds. In the evening I generally walk up and down there with the dog, and then I often think of that poem,

" Under the Stars."—The roses against the house are in bloom, and in the garden the elder bushes and the jessamine also. Lately I was again in the Trippenhuis to see if those rooms that were shut when we were there, were open again, but another fortnight will pass before they will again be open to the public. There were many foreigners there, French and English, to hear them speak calls up many memories in me. Yet I am not sorry to be back here. " Life has quicksands, life has snares," is a true word.

How is Mrs. Tersteeg? If you meet Mauve or go to see him, give him my best regards, also at Haanebeek's and Roos's.

Now I must set to work again, to-day I have no lesson, but to-morrow morning two hours, so I have a great deal to prepare. I studied through the Old Testament up to Samuel, to-night I begin with the Kings, when that is finished it will be something worth while.

When I am writing I instinctively make a little drawing, now and then, like the one I sent you lately, and for instance, this morning, Elijah in the desert, with the stormy sky, and in the foreground a few thorn bushes, it is nothing special but I see it all so vividly before me, and I think that at such moments I could speak about it with enthusiasm; may it be given me to do so later on.

I hope you are having a good time, when you come into the woods of Scheveningen or to the beach, greet them for me; when you come here again I shall be able to show you some fine places here too. When I go to Mendes I pass the Jewish quarter every day. And now à Dieu, a handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

102

Dear Theo, Amsterdam Sunday July 15 1877.

I long to write to you again, you will also let me hear from you soon I hope?

This morning I went to the early service, the text was Ephesians v. 14: " Awake thou that sleepeth and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light." As I left the house it rained and also

when the service was over, but during the sermon the sun was shining brightly through the windows.

Father had an early morning service to-day at Etten, and after that he had to go to Zundert. Later on, I heard good Uncle Stricker in the Oudezyds Chapel on the text "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," namely—a warning against attaching too much importance to outward forms and ceremonies, without true and sincere religious feeling of the heart, and in opposition to that, life without belief in things that are higher than the material ones.—There were but very few people in church, except the boys and girls from the orphanage in their red and black clothes, they filled a great part of the little old church.

When you come here again I hope to take you there some day, the Oudezyds Chapel stands in a very narrow street called the Zeedyk, quite near the part of the Buitenkant that is called the old Teertuinen, and quite near the Warmoes Straat.

It is a very curious part of the town and reminds one of the heart of London, Bookseller's Row for instance.

May it be given to me in time to preach as well as many I have heard in the past and hear now.—I try my utmost to prepare for it. I am very busy making a summary of the history of the Reformation, the history of those days is quite stimulating and attractive.

Last week I spent an evening with the old Rev. Meyes and met there his son the Rev. Jeremie Meyes with his wife, a daughter of Professor Tilanus, and two of their sons, the one here at the gymnasium, and the other one studying to be an engineer. The latter has helped to build those sheds here in the Yard (under which they build the ships, like we saw with Uncle that afternoon when you were here) and also he has helped to build that new Kattenburger bridge.

It was a pleasant evening and we spoke about many things abroad. He is a very gifted man, and has great talent and great faith, I heard him in the West church. I saw him descend from the pulpit and pass through the church after the sermon, and that tall noble figure, that tired and pale face and the noble head, the hair already mixed with grey, made a deep impression upon me. To be tired from your work in that way, seems to me a blessing.

To-day you will perhaps go to Scheveningen. I hope you will

have a pleasant Sunday, how I should like to be with you in your little room. I heard from home that you will probably soon pay a visit to Mauve at his house in the dunes and stay there over night, in thought I see you sitting there, and what you two will be talking about I know also.

Mendes told me last week about a very interesting part of the city, namely, the outskirts that extend from the Leidsche Poort, that is near the Vondel Park, to the Dutch railroad station. It is full of mills and sawmills, workmen's cottages with little gardens, also old houses, everything, and it is very populous, and the quarter is cut through by many small canals and waterways full of boats and all kinds of picturesque bridges, etc. It must be a splendid thing to be a clergyman in such a quarter.

The study is very difficult, boy, but I must keep on.

If you see Mauve and Jet one of these days, give them my best regards and spend some pleasant hours there and say good-bye for me to the dunes and the sea. And tell Mauve that the photograph from his drawing, "The Plough in the Field," is hanging in my little room, and reminds me of him every day. Are you reading a nice book? There are so many books I should like to read, but I may not.

If you can get "John Halifax" read it over again, though we read it with melancholy yet we must not say "that is nothing for me," for it is good to keep your faith in everything that is good and noble. —I heard that not long ago the man died whose life and character inspired the author of this book, his name was Harper and he was the head of a large publishing firm in London.

Once I met on the street in London the painter Millais, just after I had been so lucky as to see several of his pictures. And that noble figure reminded me of John Halifax. Millais painted once, "The Lost Mite," a young woman who early in the morning, at dawn, is looking for the mite she has lost (there is also an engraving of "The Lost Mite"), and not the least beautiful of his pictures is an autumn landscape, "Chill October." à Dieu, boy, a firm handshake in thought and believe me with kind regards to the family,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

That room in the Trippenhuis where Rembrandt's "Drapers' Syndicate" is hung, is open again, coming from church I entered there for a moment; quite next to the Rembrandt hangs that portrait by van der Helst.

103

Dear Theo, Amsterdam July 27 1877.

Thanks for your last letter, from home I heard that you have paid your visit to Mauve already, that must have been a pleasant day, sometime I hope to hear the particulars from you. Enclosed a contribution to your collection, three lithographs after Bosboom and two by J. Weissenbruch, I found them this morning at a bookstall. Do you think the one after Bosboom can be the church in Scheveningen? The other one is the large church at Breda, the third is after his picture that was at the great Exhibition in Paris. Those two by Weissenbruch struck me, perhaps you have them already, but maybe not. Go on collecting such prints, and books too. At present I am collecting Latin and Greek exercises and all kinds of writings about history, etc., I am writing about the Reformation now, and it becomes quite lengthy.

Some time ago I met a young man who had just passed his admission examination for the Leyden University,—it is not easy, he told me what questions they had put to him, but I must keep courage, with God's help I will pass this, and the other examinations too. Mendes has given me hope that at the end of three months we shall have accomplished what he had planned we should, if everything went well, but Greek lessons in the heart of Amsterdam, in the heart of the Jewish quarter, on a very close and sultry summer afternoon, with the feeling that many difficult examinations await you, arranged by very learned and cunning professors, I can tell you they make one feel more oppressed than the Brabant cornfields, that are beautiful on such a day.—But we must always "push on," like Uncle Jan says.

A few days ago two children fell in the water near the Kattenburger bridge. Uncle saw it and ordered out the boat from the Makassar, that was lying in the dock. They dragged the little boy out; with two ship's doctors that Uncle sent for I accom-

panied the men that carried the little boy to a drug store and every effort was made to restore life in the child, but in vain. Meanwhile he was recognized by the father, who is stoker at the Yard, and in a blanket they carried home the little corpse. They continued searching for an hour and a half thinking the little girl had also been drowned, but happily that seems not to have been the case. That evening I went once more to see those people, it was already dark in the house, the little corpse was lying so still on a bed in the little parlour, he was such a pretty little boy. There was great sorrow, he had been the light of the house as it were, and the light had now been extinguished. Though rough people give utterance to their sorrow in a rough way and without dignity, like this mother, still one feels deeply in a house of mourning, and that impression remained with me the whole evening, while I took a long walk.

Last Sunday morning I took a fine walk, first I went to the morning service: the Rev. Posthumus Meyes in the North church, then to Bicker's Island, where I walked along the dyke along the Y, until it was church time again, and then to the Island church, where Uncle Stricker preached. So time passes and quickly too, we are almost at the end of the week. How are you, boy? so very often every day I think of you. May God help us in our struggle to keep straight, you are right in associating with good artists, I too, cling fast to the memory of many of them.

There is written, " Conquer the evil with the good," and we may try after that, and God can help us therein, and He can make the days bearable for us with many good things, and He can spare us from too great self-reproach.

When Uncle Jan, that afternoon of the accident, ordered the boat and the doctors to the rescue I saw him in his element.

Now I must set to work again, but I must just finish up this page. Generally I get up very early in the morning, and when the sun rises over the Yard, and after some time the workmen come pouring in, it is such a beautiful sight from my window, and I could wish you here. Will it be given me to sit on such a morning writing a sermon on, " He makes His sun to rise on the just and the unjust," or " Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," or " It is right to praise the Lord in the early morning and it is good for the eyes to see the sun."

I think the sun never shines more beautifully than in a parsonage or in a church. It is delightful to study the Bible so early in the morning. If you have time and a stamp and paper, write to me soon. Uncle Jan sends you his compliments.

It must have been fine that evening in the dunes you describe. At Uncle Cor's, in the gallery I saw the other day, "The Evangels," by Bida,[1] how beautiful it is, it is impossible to express its beauty. There is much in it that reminds one of Rembrandt.

With best wishes and a handshake in thought believe me always,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

104

Dear Theo, Amsterdam August 3 1877.

Thanks for your last letter which made me very happy, many thanks. So you have been at Mauve's and had a good time, did you make any drawing while you were there? I was once at the studio of Weissenbruch, a few days before my first departure for London, and the memory of what I saw there, the studies and pictures, is still as vivid as that of the man himself. When you write again tell me something about the exhibition that opened yesterday; how many subjects for pictures the artists could find here on the wharf.

The Rev. Meyes was here a few days ago with two of his sons, and Uncle gave us permission to visit the Yard, and the workshops; the forges, etc., were now in full swing; when we were there together that Sunday everything was closed; I also visited with Uncle Pompe and Uncle Jan the training ship the Wassenaar, that too was very interesting.

This week the house here was full of people, Uncle and Aunt Pompe and Jan, Uncle Cor, Vincent, and Bertha van Gogh from Haarlem. The latter is a very nice little girl.

Last Sunday I was at the early morning service of the Rev. Hasebroek, and in the morning again in that Oudezyds Chapel of which I told you before. So each day I try my best to get on with my work, especially with the Latin and Greek, and I have

[1] Painter of Oriental subjects; pupil of Delacroix.

already made a great many exercises, composed of sentences that remind me of the old school days, for instance: "Which very excellent philosopher has been condemned to death by the Athenians? The very noble and very wise Socrates. Our life greatly resembles a journey and is exposed to very many and very great dangers. The nature of Odysseus, and the grapes of the vineyard."

This morning I got up very early, it had been raining over night, but very soon the sun broke through the clouds, the ground and the piles of wood and beams in the Yard were drenched, in the pools the sky was reflected quite golden from the rising sun, and at five o'clock I saw all those hundreds of workmen scatter all over like little black figures. I often visit Uncle Stricker in his study. He is very clever and possesses a great many fine books, and has a deep love for his work and his profession. Last Monday father wrote me a very cheerful letter from Helvoirt.

From home I heard that you had a bill from Doctor Coster to the amount of 40 guilders, that is a big sum, and the paying of it will remind you of the feeling of having a tooth pulled; if only I could help you a little, but you know that I possess neither gold nor silver. By all kinds of devices I must often try to get money for the collections in church, for instance, by changing stamps for pennies in a tobacco shop, but my boy, by struggling we can keep up, and you know that it is written, that the poor will be blessed in the Kingdom of God.

Whenever I see Uncle Vincent I am struck anew by something indescribably charming and I should say something good and spiritual in him, I do not know what to call it. Father has it still more, and Uncle Jan has it in another way, and it is also in Uncle Cor. Among a hundred people you will not always find one who is like them, let us preciously treasure their memory and their image. Can it be that which Fénelon describes in his "Télémachus" as follows?

"He to whom he had addressed himself by chance, was a stranger who had an impressive air but at the same time something sad and depressed, he seemed now and then, to think of former times; he had something very resolute about him, or was deeply moved and agitated. At first he hardly listened to the question of Telemachus, but at last he answered: 'you are right, Ulyssus has been

received by King Alcinous as in a place where they fear God and offer hospitality, but he is no longer there and you would look for him in vain, he has started for Ithaca, if the angry gods will at last allow him to come back to his Penates.' Telemachus looked at him fixedly; the longer he looked at him, the more moved he was and astonished. That stranger, said he to Mentor, has answered me as a man who scarcely listens to what is said to him and who is full of bitterness. I pity those that are unhappy, since I am so myself and I feel that my heart is interested without knowing why. He has received me badly enough, scarcely has he deigned to listen to me or to answer. Then Mentor said to him: I myself am not astonished, dear Telemachus, to see you so moved. The cause of your sorrow, which is unknown to you is not so to Mentor, it is nature that speaks, that makes herself felt, it is she that softens your heart, the stranger that gave you such vivid emotion is the great Ulyssus. He is going straight to Ithaca, already he is quite near the port and at last he sees again the place so fervently longed for.

Your eyes have seen him, but without knowing him, soon you will see him and you will know him, and he will know you, but now the gods cannot permit your knowing each other outside of Ithaca. His heart has been no less moved than yours, he is too wise to make himself known to any mortal in a place where he might be exposed to treachery. Ulyssus your father is the wisest of all men, his heart is like a deep well, one cannot fathom its secrets. He loves Truth, and never says anything to wound her, but he tells her only when it is necessary and wise, his lips are always sealed to all vain words. How moved he was in speaking to you. How he has forced himself not to reveal himself, what has he not suffered in seeing you. That was what made him sad and depressed."

And now boy, a hearty handshake in thought. My regards to Mauve and others you may meet, especially to the Roos family; have a good time, I heartily wish you may find a way to pay that bill, à Dieu, and believe me,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Dear Theo, Amsterdam August 5 1877.

Thanks for yesterday's letter, that was a good one, there was so much in it, it was quite refreshing to me.

I found a few stamps enclosed, for which many thanks, and then you say you will send a money order, so that I may come to the Hague to see the exhibition of drawings. That money order arrived to-day, Sunday, thanks for it and for your kind offer, I send it back however and do not come, much though I should like to see the beautiful and interesting things about which you write.

I have already refused to go to Baarn, in the first place because I'd rather spend my Sunday in going to church a few times, and in writing, and in studying a little, in the second place, because I should have to ask the money for the journey of Uncle Stricker, who has money from father which is at my disposal in case of need, but I hope to do that as little as possible.

If I go to the Hague I must also go to Baarn, and then once is not enough—"quoi qu'il en soit"—I had rather not. Besides boy, I know you need the money yourself. But many, many thanks you know. I am not sorry that I do not always have money in my pocket. I have such a craving for thousands of things, and if I had money I would perhaps soon spend it on books, and other things, which I can very well do without, and which would divert my attention from the strictly necessary studies. Even now, it is not always easy to fight against distractions, and if I had money it would be worse still. And here on earth one always remains poor and needy, that is what I have learned already; but in one thing we can be rich, in God, and that is the part that will not be taken from us. And there may come a time in which we can spend our money better than on the best books, etc., and when we shall be sorry to have had too many expenses in our youth,—when we shall perhaps have a household of our own, and others to care for and to think about. In the midst of life we are near death, that is a word that touches each one of us personally, it is a truth we see again confirmed in what you tell me about Caroline van S—— and formerly we saw it in another member of that same family. It has touched me and with all my heart I hope she may recover, oh! what sorrow, what sadness and suffering there is in

the world, in public as well as in private life. How everything is changed in that house, compared to what it was a few years ago, "das war vor langen Jahren, wenn wir beisammen waren"; that was the time of "der Wirthin Töchterlein," and Longfellow says, "there are thoughts that make the strong heart weak," but above all there is written "let him who puts his hand to the plough not look back and be a man." I often look at the engraving after the picture by Ruysdael: "Haarlem and Overveen," that painter knew it also.

If she should soon recover so far as to be able to be moved to the Hague, and if you see her then, greet her for me, and if you can find a word to cheer her or give her courage, and remind her how much she is needed in this world, and what right and reason she has to live, especially for her children's sake, say it and you do a good work. A strong word coming from the heart, spoken in time can cheer and comfort. This morning I was up rather early and left the house about six o'clock to go to the early morning service, then I walked through all kinds of old streets where I wished to have you with me; you know the picture (at least the lithograph and woodcut after it) by Daubigny: "Le pont Marie," it reminded me of that. I like to walk in old narrow, and more or less gloomy streets, with drug stores, lithographic, and other printing offices and shops of sea-charts, and stores of ship-victuals etc. which one finds there near the Oudzyds Chapel and the Teertuinen, and the end of the Warmoes Straat, everything is full of interest there. I just stepped in to say good morning to Vos and K—.[1] and then went to the Island church, where the Rev. ten Kate, the poet of "the Creation" and author of many beautiful books, preached on Romans i. 15–17. It was a very crowded church and one saw an expression of *faith* written on many faces, of men as well as of women but written in different characters.

Sometimes his voice had intonations and expressions like those of father and he spoke very well and from a full heart, and though the sermon was not short, the service was over almost before one knew it, for his words were so full of interest that one forgot the time.

For a change I made last week an excerpt from the journeys of Paul and drew a map of them, that is a good thing to possess.

[1] The son-in-law and daughter of the Rev. Stricker.

The other day Uncle Stricker gave me a book on the geography of Palestine (in German, by van Raumer) of which he had a duplicate copy.

The following is a fine fragment from "Telemachus": Mentor says: "the earth is never ungrateful, she always nourishes with her fruit those who cultivate her with care and with love, she refuses her wealth only to those who fear to labour for her. The more children the peasants have, the richer they are, if their lords do not tax them too heavily, for from their earliest childhood the children begin to assist them. The youngest guard the sheep in the meadows, the others who are a little older have large herds entrusted to their care, the oldest work with their father. Meanwhile the mother prepares a simple meal for her husband and her dear children, who will come home tired from the day's toil, she milks the cows and the goats and streams of milk are flowing; she makes a big fire, around which the whole innocent and happy family sits singing of an evening, until the time comes for peaceful repose."

It is more beautiful still when one thinks of it illustrated with etchings by Jacque.

Just now your post card arrived, thanks for the quick news, I hope you had a good Sunday, cousin Fanny, and Betty and Bertha are still here and are like flowers in the house.

Bertha especially is a nice little girl. My compliments to the Roos's and a handshake in thought from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

I cannot get a money order so I must send back the amount in stamps.

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Dear Theo, Amsterdam August 18 1877.

I long to write to you again, perhaps it will be a rather long time before we see each other, I hope at all events we shall be at Etten together at Christmas. Aunt Mina had her birthday last Sunday, and being there that evening Uncle Stricker asked me a few things about my work, and did not seem dissatisfied. . . . I

feel that I have made some progress. Thursday I had a nice morning; Uncle Jan had gone to Utrecht, and I had to be at Stricker's at 7 o'clock, because Jan went to Paris and I had promised to see him off. So I got up early and saw the workmen arrive in the Yard, while the sun was shining brightly.—You would enjoy that curious sight, that long line of black figures, big and small, first in the narrow street, where the sun just peeps in, and afterwards in the Yard. Then I breakfasted on a piece of dry bread and a glass of beer, that is what Dickens advises for those who are on the point of committing suicide, as being very fit to keep them, at least for some time, from that purpose. And even if one is not in such a mood, it is right to do so now and then, while thinking of, for instance Rembrandt's picture, "The Pilgrims of Emmaus." Before I went to Stricker, I walked through the Jewish quarter and along the Buitenkant, the old Teertuinen, Zeedyk, Warmoes Straat, and around the Oudzyds Chapel and the Old and the South church, through all kinds of old streets with forges and coopers' shops etc., and through narrow alleys, like the Niezel, and canals with narrow bridges, like those we saw that evening at Dordt. It was curious to notice the starting of the new day's work there.

I have written a composition in which all the parables are arranged in proper order, and the miracles, etc. I am doing the same in English and French, expecting to be able to write it afterwards in Latin and Greek too. In the daytime I have to prepare for Mendes and so I do this late in the evening, or for instance as to-day, deep in the night or early in the morning. Having been so long in England and France, it would not be right if I did not acquire a thorough mastery of these languages at last, or at least kept them up; there is written, "polissez-le sans cesse et le repolissez" and also "travaillez prenez de la peine."

How are you boy, write soon if you can, you thought I was right in returning the money didn't you, and you know that I would have just loved to come to shake hands with you, and also to see the exhibition, but for the present I do not go out of town on Sundays, I may not.

This morning I had a conversation with Mendes about M. Maris, and showed him that lithograph of those three children, and also "A Baptism," and he understood them very well. Mendes

reminds me now and then of the "Imitation of Jesus Christ," by Ruyperez.

Have you heard anything about Caroline? I had to go to Utrecht on the day of the wedding reception of Hendrick,[1] I gave also your congratulations. It was a very stylish affair, the room was very beautifully decorated, the bride looked lovely.

In Utrecht I saw the Cathedral and another old church, and the University building, that reminds one of the cloisters near Westminster Abbey. Good-bye Theo, have a good time, my compliments to the Roos family. Uncle Jan sends you his compliments, à Dieu, a handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

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Dear Theo, Amsterdam August 27 1877.

It will soon be mother's birthday, therefore I send you enclosed a money order of fr. 1.50, for I should like you and I to give her something together. It is not much, but it is all I possess, if you give the same we can buy a good photograph with it. You must choose one yourself; "Christ Walking on the Sea," by Jalabert, is more expensive, otherwise I should have liked that, and still much more expensive is the "Pilgrims of Emmaus," by Rembrandt. Well, you know what to get as well as I do and will make a good choice, but just write me on a post card the title of what you have chosen. Thanks for your letter which made me happy as did also a cheerful letter from home I received yesterday.

Yesterday was a rainy morning, so I had to put on my overcoat to go to the early service in the North Church. The Rev. Posthumus Meyes Junior preached there on Acts iv. 2, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."

His son came here yesterday and stayed some time in my little study, he came to invite me to spend this evening with them, which I readily accepted. Last week I visited the old clergyman his father. Yesterday morning I was also in the Island church where Uncle Stricker preached on Luke xi. 28. The afternoon

[1] The son of Uncle Jan van Gogh.

and part of the evening I spent at Uncle Stricker's, so I had a pleasant Sunday; I often thought what you would be doing.

Will you be going on the business trip this autumn, and will you come to Amsterdam then? I heartily hope so, write as soon as you know anything about it. And we must arrange it so that you come and stay here, there is room enough in the house and it will cost us only one word to Uncle. We must make the most of the time and occasion for being together. I have still a great deal of work to do to-day, are you very busy in the office? Last week a ship was launched in the Yard (a monitor "The Dragon"), it was an interesting sight and a great joy for the workmen. On Bicker's Island there are also many shipyards, but for smaller vessels; when I go there I look at them attentively, he who must learn to work must watch the workers, especially if he has a little study just among the workshops; for as in a shipyard large and small ships are under construction, gradually finished and then launched, so in a study, large and small works are planned, carried on by "patient continuance in well doing," and finished with God's help.

Lad, I am longing so much to see you again, come soon and try to arrange it so that we can spend some time together.

Would it be possible for you to stay here over a Sunday, I should like so much to show you the Oudzyds Chapel, and have you hear somebody preach there, for instance Uncle Stricker. Do try to arrange it so. I do not know the book by Daudet you mentioned.

Well, I must write my Greek exercises, my compliments to the Roos's and to Mauve and Jet when you go there. Adieu, brother dear, a hearty handshake in thought, I wish I could have sent you more for mother's birthday, but it is impossible, have a good time, believe me always,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Uncle Jan intends to go to Helvoirt for a week, on the first of September, I hope to profit by it by staying up late in the sitting-room to write, I can do so now, but Uncle's bedroom is quite near so I must be careful, I can sit in my bedroom, but there the temptation is too strong to go to rest when it is getting late, and in my little study there is no gas.

Dear Theo, Amsterdam September 4 '77.

Enclosed a short note for A and for L, please add a word and send them at the time of mother's birthday. (I must tell you that the reason I send them to you is, that I am afraid of having no stamps by that time, except for a letter home. If you should write later, these can also wait.) Uncle Jan left Saturday for Helvoirt and intends to stay away until the 10th of September, so it is very quiet here in the house now, but still the days go by rapidly as I have lessons daily, and must prepare for them, and I should always like to have the days longer in order to accomplish more, for it is not always easy work, and even long plodding gives but a meagre satisfaction; well, what is difficult is right, I am convinced of that, even though one sees no results.

I am also copying the whole of the "Imitation of Jesus Christ" from a French edition, which I borrowed from Uncle Cor, that book is sublime and he who wrote it must have been a man after God's own heart; a few days ago I got such an irresistible longing for that book, perhaps because I look so often at that lithograph after Ruyperez, that I asked Uncle Cor to lend it to me; now I am copying it in the evening, it means much work but I have finished the greater part of it, and I know no better way to study it. I also bought once more, Bossuet, "Oraisons Funèbres." I got them for 40 cents, I feel it is necessary to work with full strength, I often think of that word, "the days are full of evil," and one must arm oneself, and try to gather some good in order to be able to resist and be prepared.

It is, as you know, no small undertaking, and we do not know the result, but at all events I will try to fight the good fight. It is a peculiar book, that of Thomas à Kempis, there are words in it so deep and serious that one cannot read them without emotion and almost fear, at least if one reads it with a sincere desire for light and truth, that language is the eloquence that wins the heart, because it comes from the heart. You have a copy haven't you?

There is something I cannot resist telling you Theo, you, from whom I have no secrets,—in the life of Uncle Jan, Uncle Cor, and Uncle Vincent there is much, much that is good and beautiful, but still something is lacking. Don't you think, that when the first

two sit together, as often happens of an evening, in the beautiful sober room, which you know too, it is a sight which warms the heart, especially if one looks at them with love as I do? And yet the "Pilgrims of Emmaus," by Rembrandt are more beautiful still, and it might have been the same. Now it is almost so, but not quite. Father possesses what they lack, "It is good to be a Christian, to try to be one, to be entirely one, for that is Eternal Life," and now I will even go further and say: what is wanting in them is also wanting in their homes and in their families, and then you will speak or perhaps think, of the man who saw the mote in his brother's eye, and did not see the beam in his own,—and then I will answer: that may be so, but this at least is a true word: "It is good to be a Christian, to try to be one, to be one entirely."

A few days ago I spent an evening in the study of the Rev. Meyes, not the old clergyman, but the one whose appearance in church struck me so. It was a pleasant evening, he asked me a few questions about London which I could answer well, and he told me of his work, and the blessing which apparently had fallen to his share. In the room hung a very good charcoal drawing representing a religious meeting he used to have on winter evenings at his home, very well done, Israëls would have liked it, those who attended were workmen and their wives. In the book of Doré on London you also find these kind of subjects.

I also spent an evening at Stricker's, and last Sunday I heard Uncle preach on 1 Corinthians iii. 14, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward."

It often seems to me that I already feel a blessing and a change in my life.

How I should love to show you several things here in the Jewish quarter, and also in other places, I often think of de Groux, there are interiors, with wood-choppers, carpenters, grocery stores, forges, druggists, etc. etc., which would have delighted him; I saw this morning a big dark wine cellar and warehouse, with doors standing open; for a moment I saw an awful vision in my mind, you know what I mean,—in the dark vault men with lights were running to and fro, it is true that is a thing you can see daily, but there are moments when the daily common things make an extraordinary impression and have a deep significance and a different

aspect. De Groux knew so well how to put that in his pictures and especially in his lithographs.

Just while I am writing this, your letter arrives. Many thanks, I was greatly surprised to hear that Gladwell was at the Hague. Give him my best love and oh! how I should like to see him here, I immediately sent him a post card to ask him to try his very best to come to Amsterdam, do try to persuade him also. You know yourself how interesting it is for a foreigner to see the city, the Yard and this quarter too, and how I should like to show him around as much as I can, and I long to see his brown eyes that could sparkle so, when we looked at the pictures of Michel and others, and talked about "many things." Yes, it would be fine if he came and stayed as long as possible, and I think that we should feel that our former friendship was sincere and not superficial; when time has gone by one does not always continue to feel it so strongly, "but it is not dead, but it sleepeth," and it is good to see each other again to wake it up and bring it to life again.

Enclosed a little note for him, I think he must not leave Holland without having seen the Trippenhuis and van der Hoop; try your best to make him do so, at least if it is possible, and if he likes it. I must sit up to-night as long as I can keep my eyes open, so I finish this, but if I have time left I will still fill up the page.

I hope your acquaintance with Gladwell will go deeper and leave some good behind, it is a long time since I saw him last.

à Dieu, a handshake in thought, have a good time, greet Gladwell for me, and believe me always,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

109

Dear Theo, Amsterdam September 7 1877.

It was a delightful sensation to hear Gladwell's voice in the hall, while I sat working in my room upstairs, and to see him come in a moment later, and to shake hands with him. Yesterday we took a long walk through the principal streets and past most of the churches, and this morning we got up before five o'clock to see the workmen enter the Yard, and then we walked to Zeeburg, and have been twice to the Trippenhuis, and he went alone to van der

Hoop and he was also at Uncle Cor's gallery (but Uncle was out of town) and went with me to Mendes. Now we intend to go to Uncle Stricker's (for I am asked there for dinner to-day, and will risk bringing him with me). I should also like to go with him to Bicker's Island, but perhaps there is no time for that. I have advised him to go to Haarlem and see the pictures of Frans Hals, and now he will go there and not to Antwerp as he intended, but will go to Belgium another time, and now limit himself to Holland.

We also spent a great deal of time in my little study and talked about many things, new and old. . . .

Now he will spend some days with you and is longing to see your little room and the prints you have.

He gave me Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," which is as great an acquisition as Bossuet's "Oraisons Funèbres," which I bought very cheaply sometime ago, and the "Imitation" of Thomas à Kempis in Latin, which Vos gave me and which I hope to be able to read in the original some day. He read several bits here of Bungener, Esquiros, Lamennais, Souvestre, Lamartine (Cromwell) and has enjoyed the lithographs after Bosboom; we bought one from a Jew and he has asked me to buy some more for him when I get the chance.

I heartily hope you will have a pleasant evening with him and I believe the more you seek in him the more you will find in him.

We talked about many things, and what we said to each other was this: many people arriving at the moment in life when they must make a choice, have chosen for their part, "the love of Christ and poverty," or rather "give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with bread convenient for me."

The time passed only too quickly for me, and I wished that we might have been longer together, but that was impossible and each of us must go his different way and continue to do what the hand finds to do, according to his call, and I for my part am thankful from the depth of my heart, that it has been given me to see him again, and to find in him still what first attracted me. He told me that you would certainly go on the business trip in at least four weeks, so I hope to see you again too. I heartily hope he will keep a pleasant and good memory of his visit in Holland, it was brave of him to carry out his plan in spite of objections. Give my regards

to the Roos family, have a pleasant evening with Gladwell and receive a firm handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

110

Dear Theo, Amsterdam September 18 1877.

The time approaches when you will go on your business trip for Messrs. Goupil & Co., and I enjoy beforehand the prospect of seeing you again. I want to ask you one thing: could not you arrange it so that we could be quietly and calmly together for at least one whole day?

This week Mendes is out of town, spending a few days with the Rev. Schröder at Zwolle, a former pupil of his. So having some leisure I could carry out an old plan to go and see the etchings by Rembrandt in the Trippenhuis, I went there this morning, and am glad I did so. While there, I thought, could not Theo and I see them together some day? Think it over, whether you could spare a day or two for such things. How would a man like father, who so often goes long distances even in the night with a lantern, to visit a sick or dying man, to speak with him about One whose word is a light even in the night of suffering and agony, how would he feel about the etchings by Rembrandt, for instance "The Flight to Egypt in the Night" or the "Burial of Jesus?" The collection in the Trippenhuis is splendid, I saw many I had never seen before, they also told me there about drawings by Rembrandt at the Fodor Museum. If you think it possible, speak about it with Mr. Tersteeg and drop me a line when you are coming, then I can finish my work beforehand and shall be free and quite at your disposal when you come.

I never see things of that kind, etchings or paintings too, but I think of you and all at home.

But I am up to my ears in my work, for it is becoming clear to me what I really must know, what *they* know and what inspires *those* whom I should like to follow. "Examine the Scriptures" is not written in vain, but that word is a good guide and I should like to become such a scribe, who from his treasure brings forth old and new things. . . . Father wrote me that you

had been to Antwerp, I am longing to hear what you saw there.

Long ago I too saw the old pictures in the Museum, and I think I even remember a beautiful portrait by Rembrandt; if one could remember things clearly, that would be fine, but it is like the view on a long road, in the distance things appear smaller and in a haze.

One evening there was a fire here on the river—a boat laden with arrack or something like it, was burning: I was with Uncle on the Wassenaar, there was, relatively speaking, no danger as they had removed the burning steamer from between the other ships and had fastened it to the moorings. When the flames rose high one saw the Buitenkant and the black row of people that stood looking there, and the little boats that were hovering around the blaze of the fire looked also black in the water in which the flames reflected; I do not know if you remember photographs after Jazet that were in the gallery photographique at the time, but have been destroyed since, "Christmas Eve," "The Fire," and others, this was something like it.

Twilight is falling, "blessed twilight," Dickens called it and indeed he was right. Blessed twilight, especially when two or three are together in harmony of mind and like scribes bring forth old and new things from their treasure. Blessed twilight, when two or three are gathered in His name and He is in the midst of them, and blessed he who knows these things and follows them too.

Rembrandt knew that, for from the rich treasure of his heart he brought forth among other things that drawing in sepia, charcoal, ink, etc. which is at the British Museum, representing the house in Bethany. In that room twilight has fallen, the figure of our Lord, noble and impressive, stands out serious and dark against the window through which the evening twilight is falling. At the feet of Jesus sits Mary who has chosen the good part, that will not be taken away from her, and Martha is in the room busy with something or other, if I remember well she trims the fire or something like it. That drawing I hope never to forget nor what it seems to tell me: "I am the light of the world, whosoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Such things twilight tells to those who have ears to hear and a heart to understand and to believe in God,—Blessed Twilight! And in that picture by Ruyperez, the "Imitation of Jesus Christ,"

it is also twilight, and also in another etching by Rembrandt: David in Prayer to God.

But it is not always blessed twilight, as you can see from my handwriting, I am sitting upstairs by the lamp, for there are visitors downstairs and I cannot sit there with my books. Uncle Jan sends you his compliments.

Have a good time, write soon and come soon, for it is well to see each other again and to talk things over, perhaps this summer we can go and see the exhibition that will be opened one of these days. Compliments to the Roos's, à Dieu, a handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

111

Dear Theo, Amsterdam October 21 1877.

I want you to hear from me soon again; yesterday I had a good letter from Etten, from which I learned that you had been there already, and are expected back Saturday night to spend Sunday home also, so probably you are there at this moment, and it will be a good Sunday.

This morning I was at the early service in the North church, then I just took a walk through the city, the canals are especially beautiful, now that the leaves of the trees have their autumn hues, and then I went to the English church and heard a very good sermon on, "Take no thought saying: what shall we eat or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed," etc.

I love that little church and probably many an one there has memories of things and places, which are not unknown to me also. Have you ever seen or read a book by Esquiros: Life in England? (or England and the English Life). I have not, but I think it must be an interesting book.

When you have time and occasion do not forget that fragment of Jules Breton and that other of Michelet.

Have you had a good journey? Let me hear from you soon, it was a delightful surprise when you came here that evening (*N.B.* —the young woman at the station had been wondering already about our hurried departure). It was nice that we saw Mauve there too.

After coming home I sat up working still a long time. That is now already a week ago, the days fly by.

How beautiful is that engraving after Ary Scheffer, "The Holy Women at the Tomb of Christ." I am so glad I have it, the old woman especially is splendid.

Have you got something new for your collection? Go on with it, for it is a good thing.

This morning I saw the minister of Marine, Taalman Kip, who visited Uncle and lunched here; how much character there is in that face and in those grey eyes, he reminded me of old Mr. Goupil or somebody like Guizot. I do not know why, but the whole week I have been thinking of that picture and the etching after it: "A Young Citizen of the Year V," by Jules Goupil. I saw the picture in Paris, indescribably beautiful and never to be forgotten.

Those many pictures about the days of the Revolution—for instance, "The Girondins," and "Last Victims of the Terror," and "Marie Antoinette," by Delaroche, and that "Young Citizen," and other pictures by Goupil, and then Anker and so many others, what a beautiful unity they form, together with books like those of Michelet, Carlyle, and also Dickens' "Tale of Two Cities." In all of them there is something of the Spirit of the Resurrection and the Life,—that lives though it seems dead, for it is not dead but it sleepeth.

I should like to read a great deal, but I may not, though in fact I need not long for it so much, for all things are found in the word of Christ—more perfect and more beautiful than in any other book. That etching by Jules Goupil was hanging in my room in London a long time, in the days when I was so full of Michelet and other French authors, I think Harry Gladwell has the etching now. I had a short note from him since he is back in Paris, on a day like this I should like to walk again with him in the twilight, along the Seine, around Notre-Dame; Paris is so enchantingly beautiful in autumn, and that spot above all. How pretty the winter chrysanthemums will be in the little gardens in London, they keep on blooming there all winter through.

Have you planned this winter to read any books, "coûte que coûte"? Sometimes it is right to carry a thing through and to do it with a will. Uncle Jan has also read a great deal, and there is

much that is fine in him. A spiritual relation, and an attachment and love like that between father and uncle, that is a good fruit of life, and though that fire may only smoulder now and then through the pressure of the daily cares and troubles, sometimes it flares up brightly and brilliantly and gloriously, as for instance that evening last winter, when those two went together to the Hoeve.[1] ... Well, boy, I have still some work to do and must finish; have a good time, try to find something in art, and in books; there is written: "Seek and ye shall find," and "He who needeth wisdom desireth it from God,"—And that is what we need.—How is Caroline?

Greet her for me and also the Roos family, and Mauve and Tersteeg if you meet them, a hearty handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

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Dear Theo, Amsterdam October 30 1877.

Thanks for your last letter, which I enjoyed very much. Yes, boy, that etching after Jules Goupil is splendid and with all that is linked to it, it makes a good and beautiful whole, which is a good thing to treasure in one's heart.—I almost envy your having read Carlyle's "French Revolution," it is not quite unknown to me, but I have not read the whole; in another book, by Taine, I found fragments of it.

I am busy making an excerpt from Motley, among others The Conquest of den Briel, and the sieges of Haarlem, Alkmaar and Leyden, I also drew a map of it, thus making a whole of the two.

I keep my work together, all in order to help me to pass the examinations; I consult Mendes in everything and arrange my studies according to what he has done, for I should like to do it in the same way. That history of the 80 years' war is splendid, whoever should make of his life a similar good fight would do well. Indeed, life is a battle, we have to defend and protect ourselves, and with a cheerful and brave spirit we must plan and calculate in order to make progress. As we advance in life, it

[1] See Letter 82.

becomes more and more difficult, but in fighting the difficulties, the inmost strength of the heart is developed. "On grandit dans la tempête," . . . I know the "Life of Frederick the Great," illustrated by Menzel, that is a good acquisition, go on with your collection; that woodcut after Jacque, "The Sheepfold," I know too; do not forget to bring these things with you, when you come home for Christmas.

From a Jew I bought a lithograph after L. Steffens, of which you once showed me the picture, an old and a young clergyman talking together in a garden, it is a good lithograph. The scene reminded me of a picture by Jacquand, I think it is called "The New Vicar," it has the same sentiment, it also reminded me of "The Novice" by G. Doré.

Lad, the study of Latin and Greek is very difficult, but still it makes me feel happy, and I am doing what I longed to do. I may not sit up so late in the evening any more, Uncle has strictly forbidden it, still I keep in mind what is written under the etching by Rembrandt: "In medio noctis vim suam lux exerit" (In the middle of the night the light diffuses its radiance), and I keep a small gaslight burning low all night and in "medio noctis" I often lie looking at it, planning my work for the next day and thinking how to arrange my studies as well as possible.

I hope to light the fire early in the morning this winter, the winter mornings have something peculiar about them, Frère painted it in his picture of the workman, "Un Tonnelier," the etching is hanging in your room I think. Maybe you know the woodcuts by Swain, he is a clever man, his studio is in such a pleasant part of London, not far from that part of the Strand where are the offices of the illustrated papers ("The London News," "Graphic," etc.), not far also from Bookseller's Row, full of all kinds of bookstores and shops, where one sees everything, from the etchings by Rembrandt to the household edition of Dickens, and the Chandos Classics; everything there has a greenish tone, especially in foggy weather in autumn, or in the dark days before Christmas, and it is a place that reminds one of Ephesus as described so remarkably and simply in the Acts. (The bookshops in Paris are very interesting too, among others those in the Faubourg St. Germain.) Oh boy, I shall be too glad for words if I can pass my examination, if I may conquer the difficulties it will be in all simplicity

of heart but also in prayer to God, for I so often pray fervently to Him for the wisdom I need.

Monday evening I spent at Uncle Cor's, and saw Aunt and the whole family, all send you their kindest regards.

Uncle showed me that book, "L'Œuvre Gravé" de Ch. Daubigny From there I went to Uncle Stricker and had a long talk with him and Aunt, for Mendes had been to see them a few days ago (one must not talk too lightly about genius, even though one believes there is more of it in the world than many suppose, but a very remarkable person Mendes certainly is, and I am, and will remain grateful for being in contact with him) and I am glad to say he did not make an unfavourable report about me, but Uncle asked me if I did not find it very difficult, and I had to acknowledge I did indeed, and that I tried my best, in every possible way, to keep manfully on. But he told me to keep good courage.

But now still remains that terrible Algebra and Mathematics, well we must see,—after Christmas I must have lessons in those also, it is absolutely necessary. Besides I cling to the Church for aid and to the bookshops ; whenever possible I invent some errand to go there; so to-day I was at Schalekamp's and at Brinkman's in the Hartestraat (that shop of Schalekamp is very interesting to see), and I bought a few maps of the Teachers-Society, of which there are about a hundred at a penny a piece, among others, the Netherlands in all the different periods of its history.

So often, in the past too, a visit to a bookshop has cheered me and reminded me that there are good things in the world.

The picture by Israëls, which you describe must be very beautiful, I can quite well imagine how it is, from your vivid description. I saw a small picture by him at Uncle Cor's, also one by Mauve, very fine, a shepherd with a flock of sheep on the dunes.

I had a nice cheerful letter from home, I was glad to hear that things are somewhat better at Prinsenhage, how I long for Christmas, bring with you as many things as you can, that will be good for us all. Do not hurry in sending the tobacco, *I have some left*, it is a good and necessary help in the study.

I wrote a long letter to Harry Gladwell, who left to-day, I sent your regards too.

When you have time and opportunity do not forget Michelet, you know, and J. Breton, but you know what it is for, and that

there is no hurry and by Christmas will be time enough. Now I must set to work, the paper is almost full. Have a good time and write to me soon. Uncle sends you his greetings, also Uncle and Aunt Stricker. Give my compliments to the Roos family, also to Mauve and his wife, and to Tersteeg and v. Stockum, how is Caroline?

A blessing on all you undertake, keep courage and good cheer during these autumn days and may Christmas come soon, and you and I be together again before we know it. à Dieu, a handshake in thought and believe me,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

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Dear Theo, Amsterdam November 19 1877.

I long to write to you again, for I often think of you and wish it were Christmas, when we shall see each other again.

Well, the dark days before Christmas are already in sight, and back of them lies Christmas, like the kindly light of the houses back of the rocks and the water that beats against them on a dark night.

Christmas has always been a beacon light to us, and may it always be so. For the first time there has been an entrance examination at the University, I too shall have to take it here in this city. Besides the ordinary subjects, Latin, Greek, Algebra and Mathematics, they have also examined in History, Geography, and Dutch Grammar.

I have been looking for a teacher in Algebra and Mathematics and have found one, a cousin of Mendes, Teixeira de Mattos, teacher at the Jewish pauper school. He gives me hope that we shall be ready about October of next year. If I should pass the examination, I shall have done it quicker than I expected, for when I began, they told me two years would be necessary for the first four subjects, while if I should succeed I shall have done more in a shorter time.—May God give me the wisdom which I need and grant me what I so fervently desire, that is, to finish my studies as quickly as possible and be ordained, so that I can perform the practical duties of a clergyman.

The preparatory studies (that precede the real theological studies and the practice in preaching and reciting) consist of history, grammar and the geography of Greece, Minor Asia, and Italy, so I have to study these also, with the same tenacity with which a dog gnaws at a bone, and I should also like to know the grammar, history and geography of the northern countries, namely those that border on the North Sea and the Channel.

I succeeded at last in making a map of Minor Asia, Greece and Italy, rather a large one (on which the travels of Paul are indicated also) and one of England in which I got at last the something I wanted there, Mendes for one sees it, namely that it has been made with feeling and love, I put the names on it from a map in the Atlas Antiquus by Sprüner Menke, which Mendes has, it is one used for history. Do try your best to get a look at that Atlas, and also in especial at the one by Stieler, for it is the work of *real* artists. I spent two evenings at Uncle Cor's to look at old books, among them there were volumes of the "Illustration," in which I found many old acquaintances; (what an interesting magazine it is!) among others an old portrait of Dickens, and a woodcut by de Lemud, "A Cup of Coffee," a young man with rather severe and sharp features and a serious expression, who looks just as if he were pondering over a fragment from l'Imitation de la vie monastique, or as if he were planning some difficult but good work, as only "une âme en peine" can do. Such work is not always the worst, for what is wrought in sorrow, lives for all time. "Heureux celui que la vérité instruit, non par des mots fugitifs, mais par elle même en se montrant telle qu'elle est," is a good saying. I was also at Uncle Cor's on Aunt's birthday last Friday, they played cards that evening, and as I cannot play I read in Aug. Gruson, "Histoire des Croisades," (Panthéon Classique 50 cmes.). It is a fine little book, I should almost say written with the sentiment of Thys Maris, for instance when he describes an old castle on a rock, with the autumn woods in twilight, and in the foreground the black fields, with a peasant who is ploughing with a white horse; it reminded me also of Michelet and Carlyle.

I should like very much to have father know that etching of a Young Citizen of the Year V. Shall we send it on father's birthday, or before, with some other small photographs about the Revolution, so that they form a whole, from which father can see

what occupies our thoughts so often? You have heard I suppose, that there came sad tidings from Brussels to-day, and that father has gone there already. Uncle Jan, who received a telegram with these tidings from mother, wired to father and received in answer, " condition unchanged, do not come yet, I am here."

Uncle Jan and Uncle Cor were ready to start together for Brussels, but now they wait for further news from father. Will that long and terrible suffering come to an end at last.

Good-bye Theo, write soon boy if you can, may God keep us in health and give us the lucidity, the strength and the cheerfulness, which we need every day. A hearty handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Those tidings about Uncle Hein came while I was writing this.

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Dear Theo, Amsterdam November 25 1877.

Thanks for your nice letter, thanks also for that page from Michelet, I have copied it on the back of that map of Normandy and Brittany; how noble and beautiful it is, of a peculiar, weird beauty, the finest expression of which we find in that story of Elijah near the brook of Kison and with the widow—it is written in simplicity of heart and simpleness of mind, by one who was sorrowful yet always rejoicing.

I am glad you will go to the library to see those maps by Stieler and Sprüner Menke, they too are beautiful with the same beauty. Last night I was at Uncle Cor's and there looked at them again; when you look through the Atlas notice also the maps of Denmark, Sweden and Norway and especially that of Greece.

Father wrote from Brussels, and afterwards wired both the Uncles to come. When the letter came, Uncle Jan had just gone to the Leidschestraat[1] and I went there too, to bring him the letter, though rather afraid, that Uncle might have just gone home, so that we should miss each other. On the Dam I found Uncle standing, under the light of a lantern, waiting for a bus. We then

[1] Where Uncle Cor lived.

entered the express office of v. Gend & Loos, there on the Dam, and read the letter. Next day they both left for Brussels, Uncle Cor has already come back.

Things in Brussels are very, very sad. When one hears such things—so terrible—and yet they may befall us too, for what are we, and what distinguishes us—one begins rather to realize why He spoke that word: "If a man hate not his life, he cannot be my disciple," for there is reason to hate that life, and what is called, "This body of death." And with reason it is written, "Si vous désirez appendre et savoir utilement quelque chose, aimez à rester inconnu et à n'être compté pour rien, et l'étude la plus élevée et la plus utile, c'est de se bien connaître et de se mépriser." —I had to draw for Mendes a map of Ancient Italy, or rather two, for I drew also one of middle Italy, just about from Rome to Naples.

When I saw Uncle Jan standing on the Dam that evening, his figure reminded me of Landseer's "Highlander" (or is that engraving called "The Mountain Top"?).

This week I paid a visit to the Rev. Jeremie Meyes. I went there when it rained, hoping to find him at home, but he was out, perhaps for that very reason he had gone to visit somebody else. But his wife was at home, and was sitting sewing in a little room,—like the little back room in Etten—(but this was looking out on the street). She reminds me of Mrs. Jones. They are such nice people, I met them lately at a lecture, and they differed from the other people like a mossgrown old apple tree or a rose bush would differ from all kinds of unnatural exotic plants. Uncle Cor told me about the walk he took with Uncle Jan in the Bois de Cambre; you know that gnarled underbrush and the trees there with their weird forms, and it was a stormy sky with big clouds reflected in the pools on the ground. It has been a deeply melancholy journey for them both, and for father also. On the ninth day there is sometimes a change in such a condition, Uncle Jan will wait for that, and will stay probably until Monday.

The tidings from Prinsenhage are not very favourable either.

I hope to send you next month the little book about the Crusades by Gruson, when you have read it we can give it together to father.

And so Brion is dead too, well he left some beautiful work behind, do you know his "Un enterrement sur les bords du Rhin,"

an old picture? That at the Luxembourg "Noé," I also like so much, and how many things has he made! He had a great talent and has made the most of it, and gained by it. In the Illustrated edition of Erckmann-Chatrian there are many illustrations by him; The Invasion is also one of his most beautiful pictures.

To-morrow Martyn Aerssen is going to be married, and father will officiate. Aerssen is a fine man and Brion would have painted him well.

If you find in the store an old lithograph: "A Church Meeting somewhere in Lapland," and also the pendant by Mayer van Bremen: "Mothers with Children,"—the same are hanging at home—please lay them aside, and tell me what they cost.

How beautiful is that portrait of de Ruyter, an old aquatint, that hangs here in Uncle's room. I look at it so often it has a stormy or thunder-like expression, such a look as I think Cromwell must have had.

I saw at Uncle Cor's a new engraving after Erskine Nichol, "Sabbath," an old woman who is going home in the rain, it is very fine and well engraved.

To-morrow morning I shall go to the little English church I told you of, in the evening it lies there so peacefully in that quiet Beguinage, between the hawthorn hedges, and seems to say, "In loco isto dabo pacem," that means: In this place I will give peace, saith the Lord.

It is a curious view in the Yard in the morning, now that the sun rises so late, in the dark days before Christmas, and the workmen do not arrive until seven o'clock.—It is stormy outside, we have quite enough wind and rain these days.—In translating the Ancient Roman History I read how, as a sign and proof of approval and blessing from above, a raven or an eagle sometimes settled on the heads of certain persons.

It is good to know this history, and I think it is a cause for rejoicing, and deem myself very happy that I am able to learn something about these things.

Uncle Cor has given me a "Child's History of England," by Dickens, I do not know if I already told you, the book is fine gold, I read in it among other things a description of the battle of Hastings. I think if one reads attentively a few books like Motley, like Dickens, like Gruson, The Crusades, one gets

involuntarily a good and simple eye on history in general. Oh! boy, if I might pass that examination, what a blessing it would be! That first examination with all those subjects, which seem simple but are difficult enough, if once I have passed that, I shall have good courage for what must follow. . . .

I must set to work now, Latin exercises for to-morrow morning and other things. Write to me soon if you can, and have as good a time as possible. Before Christmas I hope to have made a few more of those maps by Stieler. Now I am studying, though it may cost a little more, *it must be done well*, and I will try to do it as I see others do who take their work seriously;—*it is a race and a fight for my life*, no more and no less. Whoever gets through this course of study and perseveres in it to the end, will not forget it as long as he lives, and to have done this will be something to treasure.

What a good employee that Wierda is, he is very clever too I think; there are a great many nice people in the book trade: Uncle Cor, Mr. Braat, Schröder here (that is where Mendes gets his books, and I too sometimes). One might also count Mr. Tersteeg among them and you too are in it, hold on to what you have, for you are also in the battle.

My compliments to the Roos family, à Dieu boy, we must try to travel together at Christmas, a hearty handshake in thought from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

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Dear Theo, Amsterdam December 4 1877.

I have just returned from a visit to the Rev. Jeremie Meyes, I found him at home this time, but he had to go to the churchwardens' committee, so I saw him but for a moment, I saw also his wife and the two youngest children, and Mrs. Meyes read aloud part of a letter from their son, who is at the Institute at den Helder.—Now that I myself am in for the examinations I sympathize with others, who have to take them and judging from some expressions, I can imagine how they feel. Everybody who wants to reach a social position must go through a time of great difficulties and exertion, the success may depend on trifles. If one says or writes a word

amiss at an examination, that may be the cause of failure. But it is better to think of those who succeed and get through the obstacles, than of those who fail.

Of course you know that Uncle Hein has died, we must thank God that the end was comparatively calm, and that he is at rest at last.

Write me as soon as you can when you intend to go to Etten, and if we can arrange it so that we travel together. I should like very much to use this opportunity by staying over one train at Haarlem, and especially by staying over at Dordrecht, could not we go together to Dordt? I had a few writings bound, which I wanted to keep in good condition, it was a pleasant feeling to get them home; I had it done at a bookbinder's near by, in one of the narrow streets of Kattenburg, where they publish all kinds of religious works, and the shop belongs to two brothers, whose looks remind me of two things, namely of a barn-owl and of the lion's head on the door-knockers.

I have walked a great deal this week, there is no harm in knowing the city well.

To-day while I was sitting at my work I had before me a page from the "Cours de Dessin Bargue" (the drawing examples) 1st part No. 39, Anne of Brittany. It was hanging in my room in London, together with No. 53, and "A Young Citizen" was hanging between; what I liked and admired in the beginning I like and admire still.

The expression on the face of Anne of Brittany is noble, and reminds one of the sea and the rocky coasts. I should like to know her history some day. She is a real king's daughter. De Lemud would have drawn her figure well.

I should like so much to be with you in Haarlem, write at all events, when, and for how long you get leave.

Oh! boy, I long so much for Christmas and for home, and for you, bring with you all the prints you can, even though I know them I shall enjoy seeing them again.

So another year has almost passed by, in which many things have happened for me, and I look back on it with thankfulness.

When I think over the time I spent at Braat's and the months of study here, upon the whole they are really two good things.

Boy, if next Christmas I might be at the University and were

over the difficulties of the beginning, as I am now over the beginnings of Latin and Greek, how happy I should be.

"Indefessus favente Deo" (Unwearied in God's favour), that is a good state to be in, and is a word that Mendes loves. He spoke to me about it last Saturday.

I wrote to-day to Harry Gladwell, and sent also your greetings. I hope that he will go home for Christmas.

I sent you to-day for your St. Nicholas, two maps from Stieler, the British Isles, and Normandy and Brittany. Put them up in your room for awhile, promise me that you will do so, I copied them both carefully as you know, that of England even twice; on the one that turned out best, I wrote the division of the country and the names in Latin and changed the surrounding countries as they were in the time of the Romans, for example, Lake Flevo instead of the Zuider Zee. In order to do this I went a few mornings earlier than usual to Mendes, and there compared my map with that of Brittany, Caledonia, and Ierne in the Atlas Antiquus by Sprüner Menke. So I do not need these any more, and it is a good thing for you to have them to look at for a time. At the Rev. Meyes' I also heard about that map by Stieler, his son who is at the Naval Institute at den Helder has the complete Atlas, and in his last letter he wrote among other things that he had copied the map of the world.

You know, perhaps, that Uncle Cor also has an atlas, kept in the room where the large picture by Bernier is hanging. Sometime ago I saw at Uncle's a large drawing by Bosboom: "The Vestry," also two by Miss van Bosse that were very beautiful, especially the one that represents a farm yard. At the same time with the maps you will receive Gruson's "Histoire des Croisades."

I gave this same little book to Mendes, who was glad to have it; even if you have no time to read it from the beginning to the end, you might look it through, then the most eloquent passages will readily strike you. If the work of Thys Maris is beautiful, this is so too. As Uncle Jan sent a box to Etten, I sent Cor for his St. Nicholas a lithograph after J. Maris, representing a little girl returning from the churchyard. There is a proverb that says: "Quand il n'y a plus rien, il y en a toujours encore," and I experienced it this morning when I thought I could not give a St. Nicholas present to anyone, but I have found something for everybody,

though it is not much; father and mother have a map which I drew.

Twilight is falling and the view from my window on the Yard is simply wonderful, with that little avenue of poplars, whose slender forms with their thin branches stand out so delicately against the grey evening sky, and then the old building of the warehouse in the water, which is as quiet as "the waters of the old pool," mentioned in the Book of Isaiah; the walls of that warehouse, down at the waterside are quite green and weather-beaten. Then farther down is the little garden and the fence around it with the rose bushes, and everywhere in the Yard the black figures of the workmen, and also the little dog. Just now the figure of Uncle Jan with his long grey hair is probably making his round. In the distance may be seen the masts of the ships in the dock, in front the Atjeh, quite black, and the grey and red monitors,—and just now here and there the lamps are lit. And just this moment the bell is ringing and the whole stream of workmen is pouring towards the gate, and at the same time the lamp-lighter comes to light the lantern in the Yard behind the house.

You will probably be very busy these days, but if you have a moment write to me and as soon as you can decide when you will go to Etten, let me know it at once. Couldn't we go together to Dordt, Friday or Saturday before Christmas, one must profit as much as one can from the journeys and trips one makes.

My kindest greetings to the Roos family, also to the Hanebecks and v. Stockums if you happen to go there; does Mr. Tersteeg know these maps by Stieler? à Dieu, Theo, if I do not write again before we meet, good-bye for this time, a hearty handshake in thought, believe me always,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

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Dear Theo, Amsterdam December 9 1877.

I feel I must write you without further delay, especially because I have to thank you for three things. In the first place for your nice letter of four pages, that was the greatest pleasure for me, for it does one good to feel that one has still a brother, who lives and

walks on this earth; when one has many things to think of, and many things to do, one sometimes gets the feeling: where am I, what am I doing, where am I going?—and one's brain reels, but then such a well-known voice as yours or rather a well-known handwriting makes one feel again firm ground under one's feet.

Then I must thank you for that number of the "Galerie Contemporaine" about Eduard Frère. It is very interesting and I am glad to have it, and I also thank you for the ten stamps, it really is too much, and you ought not to have done it. A hearty handshake for everything.

Now I still have to tell you something about St. Nicholas; I received a very good letter from Etten, and enclosed was some money for a pair of gloves. As I still had a pair, I bought something else with it that is another map of Stieler, Scotland separately. At present I can get them separately at Seyffardt's, but probably I shall not always have such an opportunity. I have copied the map, so I have it duplicated and as I wished to give a Christmas present to Harry Gladwell, I hope to send it to you so you can enclose it for him in the first box that goes to Paris. *One must build the house on a rock;* Scotland, Normandy and Brittany are rather rocky, as you will see if you look at that big map of Scotland, when you get it. When I compare my studies to the building of a house, and these months as the foundation of it, then these rocks are the base. But all this between parenthesis—I must still tell you about St. Nicholas eve. Uncle Cor gave me Bossuet's "Funeral Orations" in a very pretty and handy edition, very complete, among other things, there is in it the beautiful sermon about Paul on the text, "though I be weak yet am I mighty." It is a noble book, at Christmas you will see it, I was so happy to get it, that I carried it in my pocket all the time, but I must stop doing that, for fear I shall damage it. Mendes gave me the works of Claudius, also a good and serious book, I had sent him "Thomae Kempensis: de Imitatione Christi," and on the fly-leaf I wrote: "In him there is neither Jew nor Greek, nor servant nor master, nor man nor wife, but Christ is all and in all." Uncle Stricker gave me a box of cigars, you know what I did with them, the Roos' have always been so kind to me and I wondered if I could not find something to send them, when that box of cigars helped me out of the difficulty. And in the evening Uncle Jan had put

my initial cake on the table. I stepped in for a moment at Vos where Uncle and Aunt Stricker spent the evening, I could not stay there however as I had a lesson from Teixeira from 8 to 10.

Uncle Jan spent the evening at Uncle Cor's.

It is a good idea of yours to write those names on the map of Brittany. Bring it with you at Christmas, then we can compare them. You talk about my coming to the Hague on my way to Etten, I should like to do so, would there be room for me at Roos' for one night? If so you need not write to me, then I will count on it if necessary.—I should love to see your little room again, and the ivy-covered tree, I hope it may happen. I cannot tell you how I long for Christmas. I do hope father will be satisfied with what I have done. It was such delightful weather to-day, and it was so beautiful between the hawthorn hedges around the little church, when twilight began to fall.

This week I had a conversation with Mendes about "the man who hates not his own life, cannot be my disciple." Mendes asserted that that expression was too strong, but I declared that it was the simple truth, and does not Thomas à Kempis say the same when he speaks about knowing oneself and hating oneself? When we look at others, who have done more than we, and are better than we, we begin very soon to hate our own life, because it is not as good as that of others. Look at a man like Thomas à Kempis, who wrote his little book, with a simplicity and a sincerity unequalled by any other writer either before or since, or in another sphere look at the work of Millet or Jules Dupré's "The Large Oaks," that is the thing.

I hope you are having a pleasant Sunday to-day, how I should like to be with you. Uncle Jan has gone to Haarlem, so I am alone to-night, but I have a lot of work to do.

You have given me a great deal of pleasure by sending that article about Eduard Frère. I once saw the artist himself at Goupil's, he is very simple in appearance. "Enfin il vainquit" says his biography, so may it be with us sometime,—it may happen, and one should say, "I never despair."

One does not get it all at once, and most people who have attained something, have passed through a long and difficult time of preparation, that was the rock upon which their house was built. Now I must hurry, for I must set to work, so next week I shall

probably come to the Hague for a day, for instance Thursday, perhaps later, I must see how I can arrange it with my work.

From the Hague I hope to go to Dordt, if you could leave Saturday night we could meet each other at the station at Dordt. Then I should spend only two nights at Roos', once at the Hague I should like to stay somewhat longer there and visit some people.

It is a pity that Mauve is going to move to the country, I hope that we shall go there together once more, like that evening last spring, it was so pleasant then. . . .

That page from the Cours de dessin Bargue, "Anne of Brittany," I have hung in my room again; yes, a man is evil-minded by nature, but in the battle of life he may become a being of higher nature, that word came in my thought when I had been looking for a long time at the expression of the face of that royal child, Anne of Brittany, the expression that reminds one of the word, "one of sorrows and acquainted with grief; sorrowful yet always rejoicing."

à Dieu, my regards to the Roos' and believe me,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

P.S. If I do not hear from you, I come Thursday or Friday, 20th or 21st of December.

117

Dear Theo, Amsterdam January 9 1878.

I am so anxious to know if you feel better, so I am writing at once to beg you to send, at least a post card, to let me know whether you are all right again.

I arrived here safe and sound on Monday night.

Tuesday morning I began my lessons again, I intend to do over again all the exercises I have already made, at least as far as I can find time for it, besides my other work; father advised me to do this, for once one is well grounded in the grammar and the verbs, translation comes easier. When the sun rises earlier and it is less cold, so that I can begin early, I will find time for it. If one works from early morning until late at night, one can accomplish a great deal

in a few months, and so I hope to be ready for the examination by October.

I saw a great many fine drawingsat Uncle Cor's, also a new one by Rochussen, "A Soirée of Diplomats," very clever. To-night Mauve shows his drawings in Arti.[1] I should have liked to go there, but probably I saw most of the drawings when we spent that evening at his house. Uncle Cor had also a very pretty picture by Valkenburg, "A Peasant's Interior," with four little figures.

Those prints you gave me, " Le Four," by Th. Rousseau, and " The Road to Ryswyk" by Weissenbruch, I will hang in my room.

I am sorry that I did not take a later train from the Hague, then we might have been together a little longer, but now I hope to see you again in spring, when you go on your business trip. It is very cold here these days, and this morning everything was covered with snow; I am glad Uncle Vincent has gone abroad, he will be at Paris to-night.

Remember when you see Mauve, to ask him for that poem by Jules Breton, Le Laboureur, and send it to me when you get it. Uncle Cor asked me to-day if I did not like " Phryne" by Gérôme, and I told him that I would rather see a homely woman by Israëls or Millet, or an old woman by Eduard Frère; for of what use is such a beautiful body as that of Phryne, the animals have it too, perhaps even more than men, but the soul, as it lives in the people painted by Israëls or Millet or Frère, that is what animals never have, and is not life given us to become richer in spirit, even though the outward appearance may suffer from it? For the figure by Gérôme I feel very little sympathy, for I discover in it no sign of spirituality, and a pair of hands that show they have worked are more beautiful than those of this figure.

And greater still is the difference between such a beautiful girl and a man like Parker, or Thomas à Kempis, or those Meissonier painted, and, as little as one can serve two masters, can one love two such different things, and have sympathy for both. And then Uncle Cor asked me, if I should feel no attraction for a beautiful woman or girl, but I told him I would feel more attraction for, and would rather come in contact with one who was ugly, or old, or poor, or in some way unhappy, but who through experience and sorrow, had gained a mind and a soul.

[1] Art Club in Amsterdam.

There was also at Uncle Cor's a beautiful drawing by Maris, a view of the city with water in the foreground and a big sky. I suppose you know it. Write again soon, and have a good time, my regards to the Roos'. à Dieu, a hearty handshake in thought, and believe me always,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

118

Dear Theo, Amsterdam February 10 1878.

It is Sunday night, and I am going to write to you again, for I long, not a little, to get another letter from you, write again soon, I am so often with you in thought. I heartily hope you have had a pleasant Sunday. As you know father has been here, and I was so glad he came, we went together to Mendes, Uncle Stricker and Uncle Cor and the two families Meyes, and the most pleasant recollection of father's visit is of a morning we spent together in my little room, correcting some work and talking over several things.

You can imagine the days flew by, and when I had seen father off at the station, and had looked after the train as long as it was in sight, even the smoke of it, and came home to my room and saw father's chair still standing near the little table on which the books and copy-books of the day before were still lying, though I know that we shall see each other again pretty soon, I cried like a child.

This morning I was in the English church, and on leaving I met Wierda. We walked a bit of the road together, and he asked me if I would come and see his room, he lives in the Wetering straat, so I went with him and stayed for lunch, until about three o'clock, and saw his books and heard different things about his life. Then home again, and translated a page or so from Cæsar, and this afternoon I was at Uncle Stricker's; I go there rather often now that Uncle Jan is out of town and the house again lonely with father gone.

It is foggy here to-day, luckily the weather was fine during father's visit so that we could take many a walk. Probably Uncle Jan will come back on Tuesday.

I suppose you are very busy in the beginning of the year, like

most people; for me things are becoming more and more serious as the examination draws nearer, I shall be glad when it gets light earlier in the morning. Has father thought of giving you that photograph after Maris? The woodcut after van Goyen: "Dordrecht," is hanging in its place; the other day I went to see that picture again at the Museum, it is very, very fine. When you come back here I should like to look through with you, the etchings by Dürer at the Museum, as last time we did those of Rembrandt. Scheveningen will be beautiful these grey days, do you often go there, perhaps it will be like the picture by Ruysdael in the Museum at the Hague. Have you got the lithograph of it, it appeared in the Kunstkronyk long ago? It is a very good one.

How is Mauve, I hope he is well, have you seen him lately?

Twice a week now, I have a lesson from Uncle Stricker, I profit a great deal by it as Uncle is very clever and I am glad he has found time to do it.

Well boy, a hearty handshake in thought, I must set to work, write soon and believe me always,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Remember me to Mauve when you see him, Good-night boy, I have been writing until twelve o'clock.

119

Dear Theo, Amsterdam February 18 1878.

Thanks for your letter of the 17th of February, it made me very happy, as I had been longing for it so much. And I answer it at once, boy, for I think of you and long for you so often, and every morning I am reminded of you by the prints on the wall of my little study; "The Christus Consolator," that woodcut after van Goyen: "Dordrecht," "Le Four," by Rousseau, etc., for I received them all from you; and so the pot calls the kettle black, when you wrote me that I ought not to send you a print now and then for your room, whenever I found one that I thought you would like. So in my turn I say enough of that, but tell me if you have got some new acquisitions for your collection lately.

Last evening I saw at Uncle Cor's a whole volume of that

magazine, "L'Art," of which you have the number with the woods cuts after Corot. I was especially struck by woodcuts after drawing-by Millet, among others "The Falling Leaves," "The Ravens' Wedding," "Donkeys in a Marsh," "The Woodcutters," "Housewife Sweeping her Room," "A Farm Courtyard" (night effect), etc. Also an etching after Corot: "The Dune," and after Breton: "St. John's Eve," and others by Chauvin, and another after Millet: "The Beans."

Last Sunday I spent with Uncle Jan the whole afternoon and evening at Uncle Cor's. It was a very pleasant day for me, I had got up very early, and I went to the French church in the morning, where a clergyman from the neighbourhood of Lyon preached, he came to collect money for an evangelical mission, his sermon consisted chiefly of stories from the life of the working people in the factories there, and though he was not particularly eloquent, and one could even hear that he spoke rather with difficulty and with an effort, still his words were effective, as they came from the heart, and only such are powerful enough to touch other hearts. At one o'clock I had to be in the Sunday school of an English clergyman, Adler, in the Barndesteeg, he has a small, but very neat old church there. But the school was kept in a little room where even at that hour, in the middle of the day, the gas light was turned on. There were perhaps twenty children from that poor quarter. Though he is a foreigner he preaches in Dutch (but the service is English), and he takes his Bible class in Dutch too, and does it very well. I had brought with me the sketch of the map of the Holy Land, which I made for father's birthday, in red chalk and on strong brown paper, and I gave it to him, for I thought that little room would be a nice place for it, and I am glad it hangs on the wall there now. I had met him at Mr. McFarlane's, the clergyman of the English church on the Beguinage, whom I had ventured to call on, he received me kindly and I hope to repeat my visit some day. Besides this English clergyman, I also ventured to call on the Rev. Gagnebin. He took it in good part, and told me to come again some evening, and as he appointed this evening I must go there in a little while, and I hope to write you all about it.

Father had also advised me to try and make some acquaintances, I was so glad to speak French and English again, when one has not done so for a long time, it is a peculiar sensation.

The last two mornings I got up very early to work on a sketch of the map of Paul's travels, which I had begun, and now finished; it looks well now (with the names in French), even better than those I made for father, and for my own room, intending to give it to the Rev. Gagnebin, as I wanted to put some emphasis on that visit if possible, as he is a learned man, who perhaps can give me some good advice later on, if he sees that my intentions are serious. —I have just been at Gagnebin's, but I was told that he was too busy to receive me (yet he had fixed this hour and this day for my visit). I heard music in the house, so probably there was something going on. I left with the servant what I had made for Gagnebin, with a request that it should be given to him. I want to do such things now and then, for it certainly is very doubtful if I ever shall succeed, I mean shall ever pass all the examinations. Five years at the least is a very long time; if one begins earlier it is so much easier. It is true I can work longer, and can concentrate better, and things that many others care for have no attraction for me, but after all the work costs me greater effort. And even in case I fail I want to leave my mark here and there behind me.

There are so many, many things, one has to know, and though they try to reassure me, it constantly gives me a terribly anxious feeling, and there is no remedy for it but to set to work again, since it is clearly my *duty* to do this, cost what it may.

So I must push onward, for to stand still or to go back is out of the question, this would make things more difficult still, and bring confusion, and the end would be the necessity of beginning all over again. I had a nice letter from home, the journey seems to have done father no harm. Have a good time, and blessing on your work, and all you undertake, write soon if you can. My regards to all at the Roos', and a hearty handshake in thought. Good-night and sleep well, believe me,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

Tuesday morning. It is beautiful weather this morning, I have to go to Mendes in a few minutes.

Dear Theo, Amsterdam March 3 1878.

It is time to write to you again, how I should have liked to be with you to-day, it was such beautiful weather here, and one feels spring approaching. In the country I suppose the lark is already heard, but in the city that is impossible, unless one hears the sounds of the lark in the voice of some old clergyman, whose words come from a heart that is tuned like that of the bird.

To-day I stepped in at Uncle Cor's, he has had the reception room papered anew, and also had a new grey carpet put on the floor, and now those beautiful bookcases, in which are shelved the whole "Gazette des Beaux-Arts" in their red bindings, stand out better than before. Uncle told me that Daubigny is dead. I can tell you I was sorry to hear it, just as when I heard that Brion had died (his "Bénédicité" hangs in my room), for the work of such men, if well understood, touches more deeply than one is aware of; it must be a good thing, to die conscious of having performed some real good, and to know that by this work one will live, at least in the memory of some, and will have left a good example to those that come after. A work that is good,—it may not be eternal, but the thought expressed in it is, and the work itself will certainly remain in existence for a long, long time, and if afterwards others arise, they can do no better than follow in the footsteps of such predecessors and do their work in the same way.

Speaking about a good work, would you like to have a Flemish Imitation of Christ, I hope to send it to you soon, it is a small book that can easily be carried in one's pocket.

When Uncle told me about Daubigny, I thought of his etchings after Ruysdael: "The Bush," and "The Sunshine," and Uncle has promised me to get them, as he did not know them at all.

Last Monday night I was at the Rev. Gagnebin's and met his wife and daughter too, and was also in his study, where we sat talking until about eleven o'clock. I have studied through the Dutch history and have made an extract of thirty pages, closely written.

Do you know that Rochussen once painted the "Siege of Leyden," I think the picture belongs to Mr. de Vos. I am now

busy studying general history. I am longing ever so much for your coming here again, do try your best to stay as long as possible.

And if you can, write again soon, for you know it is always such a pleasure for me to get your letters.

Have you read a good book lately? Be sure you read the books by George Eliot, you will not regret it, *Adam Bede*, *Silas Marner*, *Felix Holt*, *Romola*, (Savonarola's history), *Scenes from Clerical Life*.

When I have time again for reading, I shall certainly read them over again. Have you ever seen an etching by Millet himself, a man who carries dung in a wheel-barrow in a garden, on a day like to-day, in the beginning of Spring, and remember also that he has made an etching, "Les Bêcheurs," if you ever happen to see that, you will not soon forget it. I thought to-day of the former when Uncle Stricker was looking this morning for texts in which the word dung appears, for example "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it." The other day I made a list of all the pictures which I could remember by Brion, if you come here, you must tell me if I have forgotten many. Could you not tell somewhat beforehand when you will come, then I can arrange my work accordingly, so that we can be much together. à Dieu, a handshake in thought, and believe me,

Your loving brother,

Uncle Jan's compliments. Vincent.

121*

Amsterdam April 3 1878.

I have been thinking over what we have been talking about and involuntarily I thought of the saying, "nous sommes aujourd'hui ce que nous étions hier." That does not mean that one must stand still and may not try to develop oneself, on the contrary there is an urgent reason for doing so and succeeding in it. But in order to remain true to that saying one must not slide back and if one has begun to look at things in a free and open way, one must not give it up or deviate from it.

They who said: "we are the same to-day as we were yesterday," were "honest men," which is proved by the Constitution they

* In this letter Vincent in his haste omits the "Dear Theo."

made, which will remain for all times, and which has been said, to be written "avec le rayon d'en haut," and "d'un doigt de feu." It is good to be an "honest man" and to try to become so more and more, and he who believes that to be "homme intérieur et spirituel," also is part of it, is right.

He who should know with security and certainty that he belonged to them, would always go quietly and calmly on his way, not doubting of the good result in the end.—There once was a man who went to church one day and asked: "Can it be that my zeal has deceived me, that I have taken the wrong road, and have not planned it well; Oh! if I might be freed from this uncertainty, and might have the firm conviction that I shall conquer and succeed in the end!" And then a voice answered him: "And if you knew that for certain, what would you do then"—"Act now as if you knew it for certain, and you will not be confounded." Then the man went forth on his way, not unbelieving, and he went back to his work, no longer doubting or wavering.

As to being "homme intérieur et spirituel," would not one develop that by the knowledge of history in general and of certain persons from all ages, especially from the history of the Bible to that of the Revolution and from the Odyssey to the books of Dickens and Michelet? And could not one learn something from the works of such as Rembrandt and from "The Mauvaises Herbes," by Breton, or "The Hours of the Day" by Millet, or "The Bénédicité" by de Groux or Brion, or "The Conscript," by de Groux, or the one by Conscience, or "The Large Oaks," by Dupré, or even from "The Mills and Sandy Plains," by Michel?

We have talked a good deal about our duty, and how we could attain the right goal and we came to the conclusion, that in the first place our aim must be to find a steady position and a profession to which we can entirely devote ourselves.

And I believe that we also agreed on this point, that one must especially have the end in mind, and that the victory one would gain after a whole life of work and effort is better than one that is gained sooner. Whoever lives sincerely and encounters much trouble and disappointment, but is not bowed down by them, is worth more than one who has always sailed before the wind and has only known relative prosperity. For who are those that show some sign of higher life? They are those to whom may be applied

the words: "Laboureurs, votre vie est triste, laboureurs, vous souffrez dans la vie, laboureurs, vous êtes bien-heureux," they are those that bear the signs of "toute une vie de lutte et de travail soutenu sans fléchir j'amais." It is good to try to become so. So we go forth on our way, "indefessi favente Deo." As to me I must become a good clergyman, who has something to say that is right and may be of use in the world, and perhaps it is better that I have a relatively long time of preparation, and am strongly confirmed in a staunch conviction before I am called to speak to others about it. . . . If only we try to live sincerely, it will go well with us, even though we are certain to experience real sorrow, and great disappointments, and also will probably commit great faults and do wrong things, but it certainly is true, that it is better to be high-spirited, even though one makes more mistakes, than to be narrow-minded and all too prudent. It is good to love many things, for therein lies the true strength, and whosoever loves much performs much, and can accomplish much, and what is done in love, is well done; if one is struck by some book or other, for instance, by "L'Hirondelle," "L'Alouette," "Le Rossignol," "Les Aspirations d'Automne," "Je vois d'ici une dame," "J'aimais celle petite Ville singulière," by Michelet, it is because it is written from the heart in simplicity and meekness of mind. It is better to say few words, that have real significance than to say many that are but idle sounds, and are just as useless as they are easy to utter.

If one keeps on loving faithfully what is really worth loving, and does not waste one's love on insignificant and unworthy and meaningless things, one will get more light by and by and grow stronger.

The sooner one tries to master a certain profession and a certain handicraft and adopt a fairly independent way of thinking and acting, and the more one keeps to strict rules, the firmer character one will acquire, and for all that one need not become narrow-minded.

It is wise to do so, for life is but short, and time passes quickly; if one is master of one thing and understands one thing well, one has at the same time insight into and understanding of many things into the bargain. Sometimes it is well to go into the world and converse with people, and at times one is obliged to do so, but whoever would rather like to be quietly alone with his work, and

who wants but very few friends, he will go safest through the world and among people. One must never trust the occasion when one is without difficulties, or some care or trouble, and one must not take things too easily. And even in the most refined circles and the best surroundings and circumstances one must keep something of the original character of a Robinson Crusoe or anchorite, for otherwise one has no root in one's self, and one must never let the fire go out in one's soul, but keep it burning. And whoever chooses poverty for himself and loves it, possesses a great treasure, and will always clearly hear the voice of his conscience; he who hears and obeys that voice, which is the best gift of God, finds at last a friend in it, and is never alone.

So be it with us, boy, and may you have blessings on your way, and God be with you in all things and make you succeed, that is the wish, with a hearty handshake on your departure from[1]

Your so loving brother,

Vincent.

122

Dear Theo, Amsterdam May 1878.

It is time for you to hear from me again, from father I have heard already of your safe arrival, and how you walked all over the city during those first days. I am not a little curious to hear what were your first impressions, so as soon as you can find time to write it, your letter will be gladly received. It is true however that the first impressions often change, for we know too well, that it is not all gold that glitters, and though there may be a bright dawn, there is also a dark midnight and a burning and oppressive heat at noon. But just as the morning hour is a blessed hour and is worth much gold, so it is with the first impressions, they keep their worth even though they pass, for sometimes they prove to have been right after all, and one comes back to them. So write to me what you have seen those first days, and what have been your thoughts about it.

Just now we are having bad weather here, and probably in Paris it will be the same, you will soon perceive that in summer it is

[1] Theo had been temporarily transferred to the house Goupil in Paris.

much warmer there than in Holland, and you will also see the thunder skies like Bonington painted. It is rather an interesting quarter of the town where you live. When one walks through the streets there, or towards Montmartre in the morning or in the evening, one sees many a workshop, and many a little room that reminds one of "Un Tonnelier," or "Les Couturières," or other pictures by Eduard Frère, and it is good at times to see such things that are simple, when one sees so many people, who for different reasons have deviated from all that is natural, and so have lost their real and inward life, and one also sees many who live in misery and in horror, for in the evening and at night one sees all kinds of black figures wandering around, of men as well as of women, in which the terror of the night is personified, and whose misery one must range among the things that have no name in any language.

Last week one of the clergymen here died, he was known all over the country (Pantekoek). On Saturday he was buried; it was something that reminded me of "In Memoriam," that procession on the path along the green borders of the Amstel. He was the father of six children, the eldest about twenty years old. A large crowd followed and they literally jostled each other. A memorial service was held in almost all the churches yesterday. I heard Uncle Stricker, who had known him very well. He preached in the Oudzyds Chapel, where the boys from the Orphanage, and those from the Sailors' training school, usually go. The sermon was full of sentiment. Uncle's text was, "I am greatly distressed and what shall I say?" Terrible and long suffering had been his part. I heard one night one of his last sermons, and it was clear from what he said, that he shuddered and shrank from each new day and night, and especially from the one that followed the exertion of preaching. Already then one could not hear him without feeling with him, and shuddering involuntarily, for it is a dark road that leads to the eternal home, and happy is he who when the darkness and night approaches, is strengthened by the hope of a better life.

Do not let all the new distractions keep you from reading some good book, for instance, that by Michelet on the Revolution, or something by Thoré or Th. Gautier on Paris and the time of the young painters and authors. Oh! boy, how I should like to wander with you through the city.

I hope to take a long walk to-day through a quarter of the town where I have not yet often been. I finally found the house in the Breestraat, where Rembrandt lived; you know we spoke about it when you were here. Think of that certain picture in the Luxembourg: "Qui vous reçoit me reçoit, et qui me reçoit, reçoit celui qui m'a envoyé," and tell me who painted it.

Paris is so beautiful in autumn, you will begin to notice it towards the end of September.

Give my kind regards to all at Soek's, I so often remember an excursion I made with his family to Ville d'Avray. Entering the little church there, it struck me to find more than one picture by Corot, you know he was there often.

Give also my compliments to Braat and Mutters. Have a good time and write soon, and receive in thought a hearty handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

I have still to thank you for your photograph, it is very good and I am glad to have it, many thanks.

ETTEN—BORINAGE—BRUSSELS

July 1878–April 1881

Although it now has been proved that Vincent has no aptitude for study, he does not give up his ideal, which is to bring comfort to the poor through the Gospel. After a month spent in Etten he leaves in August '78 for the training school for Evangelists in Brussels, under the direction of Master Bokma. There he is the most advanced of the pupils, but cannot comply with what is required of him; one of his fellow-pupils says, "he did not know what submission was." When the three months' time of trial had passed he received *no* nomination, to his great disappointment, but he makes light of it to Theo (see Letter 126). With his father's consent he goes to the Borinage at his own expense, and lives in Paturages with the hawker van der Haegen, whose children he teaches in the evening. Besides he practises Bible reading and visiting the sick, and at last in January, 1879, he gets after all a temporary nomination for six months as Evangelist in the Borinage. All the misery of the miner's life which he witnesses there,—a serious mine accident takes place, and a strike breaks out,—shows him more and more clearly that Bible texts and sermons are of little use there, religion gives way more and more to practical work—such as nursing the sick and wounded; he gives away all he possesses, clothes, money, even his bed; he lives no longer in a boarding house, but in a small miner's hut, where even the strict necessities are wanting,—in this way he tries to follow literally Jesus' teaching. But all this is not to the liking of the committee,—it is too much zeal, and not of the right kind, in their estimation,—they reproach him, especially with the neglect of his person, and after six months, in July '79, he gets his dismissal. The days that now follow are the most bitter of his life; he wanders about full of cares, without faith, without work, without any prospects, without any friends. Few facts about that time are known, but the strikingly beautiful letters then written (Letters 132 and 133) give an idea of what passed within him. But at last deliverance is at hand; from the moment he takes up drawing again he becomes conscious of his real vocation, and finally it is like a cry of triumph when he writes in August, 1880: "Do not fear for me, if I can only go on with my work, get on my feet once more I will rise up again." He has found his work.

123

Dear Theo, Etten July 22 1878.

I add a little word to father's letter; I was glad to hear that you are getting on well in the foreign country, and that you enjoy your life, how I should like to walk with you there sometime.

I suppose father has written to you that we went to Brussels last week, in company of the Rev. Jones of Isleworth, who stayed here over Sunday. The impression of that journey was satis-

factory in so far that we think I shall find my work there sometime, —the course certainly is shorter and less expensive than in Holland, so it will be necessary to keep Belgium in mind, and to look out there till we find something. We saw the Flemish training school, it has a course of three years, while as you know in Holland the study would last for six years more at the shortest. And they do not even require that you quite finish the course, before you can apply for a place as Evangelist. What is wanted is the talent to give popular and attractive lectures for the people, rather short and interesting than long and learned. So they require less knowledge of the ancient languages and of the theological study (though all one knows about them, is a great recommendation) but they take more account of the fitness for practical work, and of the faith that comes from the heart. Still there are many obstacles to overcome, in the first place, one does not acquire at once, but only by long practice, the talent of speaking to the people, with seriousness and feeling, with fluency and ease, and what one has to say must have a meaning, and a purpose, and some persuasion to rouse one's hearers, so that they will try to root their convictions in truth. In short, one must be a popular orator to succeed over there. Ces messieurs in Brussels wanted me to come there for three months to become better acquainted, but that would again cause too many expenses, and this must be avoided as much as possible. Therefore I stay in Etten for the present, to do some preparatory work, and from here I can then pay a visit from time to time, either to the Rev. Peterson in Malines, or the Rev. de Jong in Brussels, and in that way become mutually better acquainted. How long this will take depends entirely on what they will say over there. Father and I have just written to them again.

Now I will try and write as well as I can some compositions that will prove of use to me later: I am writing one now on Rembrandt's picture, "The House of the Carpenter," in the Louvre. Yesterday father had to preach in Zundert, and I went with him. The aunts send you their love. I was also at the house of Jan Doomen, who suffers much from rheumatism in his leg and complains that he could not even walk to Breda any more, but when he is walking in the fields or in the garden, it does not trouble him so much, only the pain forces him to get up very early in the morning.

Old age comes with many ailments, as the old Rev. Meyes used to say.

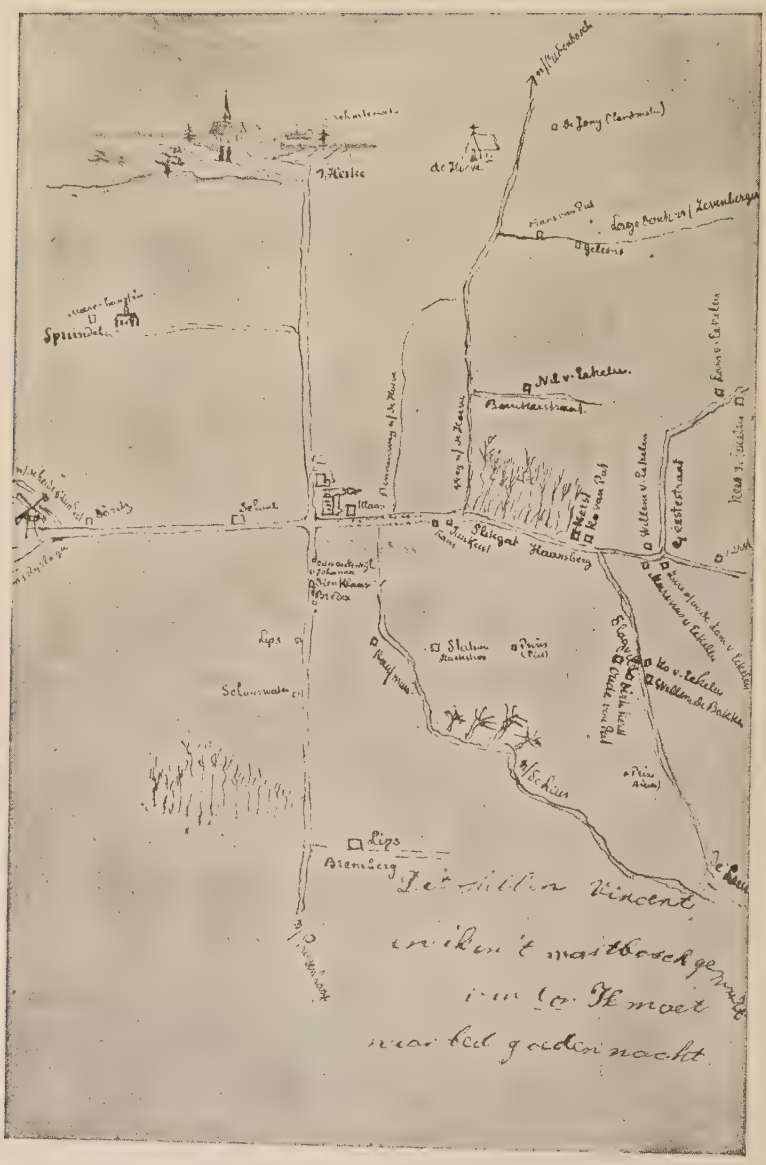
What a beautiful, excellent woodcut there was in the "Illustration" the other day, of "A Young Citizen of the Year V," by Jules Goupil, did you see it? I have got hold of it and it is hanging on the wall of the room, which is my own now, namely, the old schoolroom, that looks on the garden, and where the ivy climbs up around the windows. This is what was written in the magazine about that picture: "Un regard qui a vu le spectacle de l'affreuse guillotine, une pensée qui a survécu à toutes les scènes de la révolution. Il est presque étonné de se trouver encore vivant après tant de catastrophes." It has been a remarkable feature in art and will continue to have a great influence on many people, and it will always have an attraction for those who have a keen sense for high art, just as for instance a portrait by Fabritius does, or some more or less mystical pictures from the school of Rembrandt.

When we drove back from Zundert that evening across the heath, father and I got out and walked awhile, the sun was setting red behind the pine trees, and the evening sky was reflected in the pools; the heath and the yellow and white and grey sand were so full of harmony and sentiment,—see, there are moments in life when everything, within us too, is full of peace and sentiment, and our whole life seems to be a path through the heath, but it is not always so.

This morning I went with Cor,[1] who has his vacation, to the heath and the pine wood, away beyond the mill, and gathered heather for his rabbits, who seem to be very fond of that, and also some to fill a flower basket with. We sat for some time in the pine wood, and drew together a little map of Etten and surroundings with the Bremberg, Sprundel, 't Heike and de Hoeve.

Will you give my kindest regards to Soek and his family when you go there. Also to Frans Braat and Ernst, and the others when you happen to see them. I often think of you and am so glad that you are doing well, and that you find there things that cheer you, and feed the inner life. For this is what great art does, and the works of those who apply themselves with heart, mind and soul,

[1] His younger brother.


Spreendelen
Lips
Lips
Bremberg
Het stilleken Vincent
en iken't maitboschge
in de Hmaet
waer bet gaeden naecht

as many do whom you know and perhaps meet personally, whose words and deeds are full of spirit and life.

A hearty handshake in thought

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

124

Dear Theo, Beginning of August 1878.

I enclose a note in father's letter. I too am longing to hear from you again. I heartily hope that you are getting on as well as possible in Paris, and that you see and hear many interesting things. I just received a post card from the Rev. Pietersen; about the middle of August I shall have to go to Brussels. But as no date has been fixed and as father and mother think it better for me to stay until after Anna's wedding, I shall wait until that is over and then shall start for Brussels. The other day I made a little drawing after Emile Breton's "A Sunday Morning," in pen and ink and pencil. How I like his work. Has he made anything new this year, do you see much of his work? Yesterday and to-day I wrote a composition on the parable of the mustard seed and it is 27 pages long, I hope there is some good in it. You can imagine father and I walk a great deal around the parish, or to de Hoeve and de Leur, and I also take many a long walk across the heath with Cor.

Of course I am very curious to know how it will be in Brussels. I hope the work may prove successful and be blessed.

The fields here are now so beautiful, they are reaping the corn, and the potatoes are getting ripe and their leaves begin to wither, and the buck-wheat is full of beautiful white blossoms.

Well, boy, I am writing to you by the light of a little lantern, and the candle is getting too short. à Dieu, have a good time, and if you can, tell me something about the painters, whenever you hear something interesting about one of them, but best of all, I shall enjoy your own impressions about whatever it may be. Good night, a hearty handshake in thought from

Your loving,

Vincent.

125

Dear Theo, Etten August 15 1878.

I enclose a little word in father's letter to say good morning to you. It is raining outside as it often does lately, and it is stormy too.

I wrote to the Rev. de Jong that I am ready to come at once to Brussels, when work or duty calls me there, but if there were no urgent reasons for my coming there at once, I should like to stay a week longer here, (because of Anna's wedding), and should then come over on Sunday the 25th of August.

I wonder if the exhibition of pictures there will still be open then, I should like very much to see it. I long to hear from you. I hope to write more to you as soon as I shall be in Brussels, also about the exhibition, at least if it is not already closed.

My compliments to Braat and Soek when you see them. à Dieu, have a good time. No day passes that we do not speak of you at home. Write again soon, and receive a hearty handshake from

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

126

Dear Theo, Laeken[1] November 15 1878.

On the evening of the day we spent together, which passed only too quickly for me, I want to write to you again. It was a great joy for me to see you again and to talk with you, and it is a blessing that such a day, that passes in a moment, and such a joy that is of so short duration, stays in our memory and will never be forgotten. When we had taken leave I walked back, not along the shortest way but along the tow-path. Here are workshops of all kinds that look picturesque, especially in the evening with the lights, and to us who are also labourers and workmen, each in his sphere and in the work to which he is called, they speak in their own way, if we only listen to them, for they say: Work while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work.

It was just the moment when the street cleaners came home with their carts with the old white horses. A long row of these carts

[1] Near Brussels.

were standing at the so-called Terme des boues, at the beginning of the tow-path. Some of these old white horses resemble a certain old aquatint engraving, which you perhaps know, an engraving that has no great art value, it is true, but which struck me, and made a deep impression upon me. I mean the last from that series of prints called "The Life of a Horse." It represents an old white horse, lean and emaciated, and tired to death by a long life of heavy labour, of too much and too hard work. The poor animal is standing on a spot utterly lonely and desolate, a plain scantily covered with withered dry grass, and here and there a gnarled old tree broken and bent by the storm. On the ground lies a skull, and at a distance in the background a bleached skeleton of a horse, lying near a hut where lives a man who skins horses. Over the whole is a stormy sky, it is a cold, bleak day, gloomy and dark weather.

It is a sad and very melancholy scene, which must strike everyone who knows and feels that we also have to pass one day through the valley of the shadow of death, and "que la fin de la vie humaine, ce sont des larmes ou des cheveux blancs." What lies beyond this is a great mystery that only God knows, but He has revealed absolutely through His word that there is a resurrection of the dead.

The poor horse, the old faithful servant is standing there patiently and meekly, yet bravely and unflinchingly, like the old guard who said, "la garde meurt mais elle ne se rend pas," it awaits its last hour. Involuntarily I was reminded of that engraving, when I saw to-night those horses of the ash-carts.

As to the drivers themselves with their dirty filthy clothes, they seemed sunk and rooted still deeper in poverty than that long row or rather group of poor people, that Master de Groux has drawn in his "The Bench of the Poor." It always strikes me and it is very peculiar, that when we see the image of indescribable and unutterable desolation,—of loneliness, of poverty and misery, the end of all things, or their extreme, then rises in our mind the thought of God. At least this is the case with me and does not father also say: "There is no place where I like better to speak than in a churchyard, for there we are all on equal ground; not only are we on equal ground, but there we always *realize* it." I am

glad that we had time to see the museum together and especially the work of de Groux and Leys, and so many other interesting pictures, like that landscape of Cooseman's for instance. I am very pleased with the two prints you gave me, but you ought to have accepted from me that small etching, "The Three Mills." Now, you have paid it all yourself, and not allowed me to pay half as I wished you to do. But you must keep it for your collection, for it is remarkable, even though the reproduction is not so very good. In my ignorance, I should ascribe it rather to the Peasant Breughel than to the Velvet Breughel. I enclose the little hasty sketch, "Au Charbonnage."

I should like to begin making rough sketches from some of the many things that I meet on my way, but as it would probably keep me from my real work, it is better not to begin it. As soon

as I came home I began a sermon about the "barren fig tree," Luke xiii. 6–9.

That little drawing "Au Charbonnage" is nothing remarkable indeed, but the reason I made it is that one sees here so many people that work in the coal mines, and they are rather a characteristic kind of people. This little house stands not far from the road; it is a small inn attached to the big coal shed, where the workmen come to eat their bread and drink their glass of beer during the lunch hour.

When I was in England I applied for a position as Evangelist among the miners in the coal mines, but then they paid no heed to it, and said I had to be at least twenty-five years old. You know how one of the roots or foundations not only of the Gospel, but of the whole Bible is, "Light that rises in the darkness," *From darkness to light*. Well, who will need this most, who will have ears for it? Experience has taught that those who walk in the darkness, in the centre of the earth, like the miners in the black coal mines for instance, are very much impressed by the words of the Gospel, and believe it too. Now there is in the south of Belgium, in Hainault, in the neighbourhood of Mons, up to the French frontiers, aye, even far across it, a district called the Borinage, that has a peculiar population of labourers who work in the numerous coal mines. In a little geographical book I found the following about them: "The Borins (inhabitants of the Borinage, situated west of Mons) find their occupation exclusively in the coal mines. These mines are an imposing sight, 300 metres underground, where daily descend groups of working men, worthy of our respect and our sympathies. The miner is a particular type of the Borinage, for him daylight does not exist, and except on Sunday he never sees the sunshine. He works laboriously by a lamp whose light is pale and dim, in a narrow tunnel, his body bent double and sometimes he is obliged to crawl on the ground; he works to extract from the bowels of the earth that mineral substance of which we know the great utility; he works in the midst of thousands of ever-recurring dangers; but the Belgium miner has a happy disposition, he is used to that kind of life, and when he descends in the shaft, carrying on his hat a little lamp that is destined to guide him in the darkness, he trusts himself to God, who sees his labour and who protects him, his wife and his children."

So the Borinage is situated south of Lessines, where one finds the stone quarries.

I should very much like to go there as an Evangelist. The three months' trial demanded of me by the Rev. de Jong and the Rev Pietersen, have almost passed. St. Paul was three years in Arabia before he began to preach, and before he started on his great missionary journeys and his real work among the heathen. If I could work quietly for about three years in such a district, always learning and observing, then I should not come back from there without having something to say that was really worth hearing. I say so in all humility and yet with confidence. If God wills, and if He spares my life, I would be ready about my thirtieth year, able to begin with a peculiar training and experience, being able to master my work better, and riper for it than now.

I write you this again although we have already spoken about it many a time.

There are already in the Borinage many little Protestant communities and certainly schools also. I wish I could get a position there as Evangelist in the way we spoke about, preaching the Gospel to the poor, that means those who need it most and for whom it is so well suited, and then during the week devoting myself to teaching.

You have certainly been at St. Gilles? I also made a trip there, in the direction of the Ancienne barrière. Where the road to Mont St. Jean begins there is another hill, the Alsemberg. To the right is the cemetery of St. Gilles, full of cedars and evergreen, from where one has a view over the whole city.

Proceeding farther one arrives at Forest. The neighbourhood is very picturesque there, on the slope of the hills are old houses, like those huts in the dunes that Bosboom has sometimes painted. One sees all kinds of field labour performed there, the sowing of corn, the digging of potatoes, the washing of turnips, and everything is picturesque, even the gathering of wood, and it looks much like Montmartre. There are old houses covered with evergreen or vine, and pretty little inns; among the houses I noticed there was one of a mustard manufacturer, a certain Verkisten, his place was just like a picture by Thys Maris for instance. Here and there are places where stone is found, so they have small quarries, through which hollow roads pass, with deeply

cut wagon ruts, where one sees the little white horses with red tassels, and the drivers with blue blouses, and the shepherd is there too, and women in black with white caps, that remind one of those of de Groux. There are some places here, thank God one finds them everywhere, where one feels more at home than anywhere else, where one gets a peculiar pathetic feeling as of homesickness, in which there is some bitter melancholy; but yet it strengthens and cheers the mind, and gives us, we do not know how or why, new strength and ardour for our work, and stimulates us. That day I walked on past Forest and took a side path leading to a little old ivy-grown church. I saw many linden trees there, still more interwoven, and more Gothic so to say, than those we saw in the Park, and at the side of the hollow road, that leads to the churchyard there were twisted and gnarled stumps and tree roots, fantastical like those Albert Dürer etched in "Ritter, Tod and Teufel." Have you ever seen a picture or rather a photograph of it by Carlo Dolci: "The Garden of Olives?" There is something Rembrandtesque in it; I saw it the other day. I suppose you know that large rough etching after the same subject by Rembrandt, it is the pendant of that other, "The Bible Lecture," with those two women and a cradle? Since you told me that you had seen the picture by Father Corot on that same subject, I remembered it again, I saw it at the exhibition of his works shortly after his death and it deeply appealed to me.

How rich art is, if one can only remember what one has seen, one is never idle or truly lonely, never alone.

à Dieu, Theo, I heartily shake hands with you in thought. Have a good time, have success in your work, and meet many good things on your road, such as stay in our memory and enrich us, though apparently we possess little. When you see Mauve greet him for me and believe me,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

I kept this letter for a few days; the 15th of November is passed, so the three months have elapsed. I spoke with the Rev. de Jong and Master Bokma, they tell me that I cannot attend the school on the same conditions as they allow to the native Flemish pupils, I can follow the lessons free of charge if necessary,—but

this is the only privilege,—so in order to stay here longer I ought to have more financial means than I have at my disposition, for they are nil. So I shall perhaps soon try that plan of the Borinage. Being once in the country I shall not soon go back to a large city.

It would not be easy to live without the Faith in Him and the old confidence in Him; without it one would lose one's courage.

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Petites Wasmes December 26 1878

Dear Theo, Borinage, Hainaut.

It is time for me to write to you again, in the first place to send you my very best wishes at the beginning of the New Year. May all good be your share and God's blessing rest on your work in this year we now begin.

I am longing to receive a letter from you, to hear how you are and what you are doing, and also to hear perhaps if you have lately seen any beautiful and remarkable things.

As for me, you realize I am sure, that here in the Borinage there are no pictures; speaking in general one does not even know what a picture is. So of course I have not seen anything in the way of art since I left Brussels. But notwithstanding this the country is very picturesque and very peculiar here, everything *speaks* as it were, and is full of character. Of late in these dark days before Christmas, the ground was covered with snow; everything then reminded one of the mediæval pictures of the Peasant Breughel for instance, and of so many others who have known how to express so remarkably well that peculiar effect of red and green, black and white. At every moment I am reminded here of the work of Thys Maris or of Albert Dürer. There are hollow roads, grown over with thorn bushes, and old gnarled trees with their fantastical roots, which perfectly resemble that road on the etching by Dürer, "Death and the Knight." So, a few days ago, it was a curious sight to see the miners go home in the white snow in the evening at twilight. Those people are quite black. When they come from the dark mines into daylight they look exactly like chimney-sweeps. Their houses are very small and might rather be called huts; they are scattered along those hollow roads, and in the wood,

and on the slope of the hills. Here and there one sees moss-covered roofs, and in the evening the light shines kindly through the small-paned windows.

As we have in our Brabant the underbrush of oak, and in Holland the willows, so you see here the black thorn hedges around the gardens, fields and meadows. With the snow it makes just now an effect as of black characters on white paper, like the pages of the Gospel.

I have already spoken in public here several times, in rather a large room, especially arranged for religious meetings, as well as at the meetings they used to hold in the evenings in the miners' cottages, which may be called Bible lectures. I spoke among others, about the parable of the mustard seed, the barren fig tree, the blind-born man. On Christmas, of course about the stable in Bethlehem and peace on earth. If with God's blessing I might get a permanent appointment here, I shall be very, very happy.

Everywhere around one sees the big chimneys and the immense heaps of coal at the entrance to the mines, the so-called charbonnages. You know that large drawing by Bosboom "Chaudfontaine," that expresses well the character of the country, only here it is all coal, in the north of Hainault are the stone quarries, and in Chaudfontaine it is iron. I still think so often of the day when you were in Brussels, and of our visit to the Museum. And I often wish that you were nearer, so we could be more often together. Write again soon. Ever and again I look at that etching of "A Young Citizen."

The language of the miners is not so very easy to understand, but they understand ordinary French well, if it is only spoken quickly and fluently, then of course it naturally resembles their patois, which is spoken with great rapidity.

At a meeting this week my text was Acts xvi. 9—"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia and begged him saying: Come over into Macedonia and help us." And they listened attentively when I tried to describe what that Macedonian was like, who needed and longed for the comfort of the Gospel and for the knowledge of the only true God. How we must think of Him as a labourer with lines of sorrow and suffering and fatigue in His face, without splendour or glamour but with an immortal soul, who needs the food that does not perish,

namely "God's Word." How Jesus Christ is the Master who can comfort and strengthen a man like that Macedonian, a labourer and working man who has a hard life, because He is the Great Man of Sorrows who knows our ills, who was called a carpenter's son, though He was the Son of God, who worked for thirty years in a humble carpenter's shop to fulfil God's will, and God wills that in imitation of Christ, man should live humbly and go through life, not reaching after lofty aims, but adapting himself to the lowly, learning from the Gospel to be meek and simple of heart.

I have had already occasion to visit some patients, as there are many sick people here. I wrote to-day to the president of the committee of Evangelization, to ask him if my case may be brought up at the next meeting of the committee.

It has been thawing to-night, I cannot tell you how picturesque the hilly country is with the thaw, now the snow is melting, and the black fields with the green winter corn have again become visible. For a foreigner the village here is a real labyrinth with innumerable narrow streets and alleys of small miners' huts, situated at the foot of the hills as well as on the slope and on the top. You can best compare it to a village like Scheveningen, especially the back streets, or to those villages in Brittany, which we know from the pictures.

But you have travelled through this same part of the country on your way to Paris, and perhaps you remember it somewhat. The Protestant churches are small like that of de Hoeve, only a little larger, but the place where I spoke is only a simple large room that can accommodate at the most a hundred people. I also assisted at a religious service in a stable or shed, so you see it is quite simple and original.

Write soon if you have time, and know that you are again and again, aye constantly, in my thoughts. May God's blessing be yours in the New Year. Believe me with a handshake always,

Your so loving brother,

Vincent.

My regards to everyone at Roos' and also to every one who may inquire after me.

When you write, please address your letter: M. van der Haegen, colporteur a Paturages, près de Mons, Borinage, Hainaut.

I have just visited a little old mother in a charcoal-burner s family. She is very ill, but patient and full of faith. I read a chapter with her and prayed with them all. People here are rather characteristic in their simplicity and good nature, like the Brabant people at Zundert and Etten.

128

Dear Theo, (March 1879).

From father and mother I heard that you surprised them with a visit lately, just when father returned from here. I am very glad father has been here. We visited together the three clergymen of the Borinage, and walked through the snow, and visited a miner's family and saw the coal brought up from a mine called Les Trois Diefs (The Three Mounds), and father assisted at two Bible Lectures, so we have done a great deal in those few days. I think father has received an impression of the Borinage that he will not easily forget, as would be the case with every one who visited this curious, remarkable, and picturesque region. It is a long time since I wrote you. If with God's help I might succeed here in my work, you ought to come and see me here some day, perhaps when you have to go to Paris again, or when you go on the usual business trip.

The other day I found at the house of an elderly man who has worked in the mines for many years, a list of all the coal veins at the south of Mons and there are one hundred and fifty-five of them. The country and the people seem more and more attractive to me every day. One has a home-like feeling here, like on the heath, or in the dunes; there is something simple and good-natured in the people.

Those who go away from here are homesick for the country, and on the other hand the foreigners who are homesick might learn to feel at home here.

How are Mauve and Maris? Have you seen many pictures lately? Spring, that is near, will bring fresh material for subjects. What has Israëls been making this winter? How many things they would find here that would appeal to them; when the cart with the white horse brings a wounded man home from the mines, one

sees things that remind one of "The Wreck" by Israëls, and so there is every moment something that moves one intensely.

Write soon again, and remember that when you tell me something about the painters, I am still capable of understanding it, though it is long since I have seen any pictures.

I have rented a small house which I should like to make my home, but now it serves me only for workshop or study, as father, and I too, think it better that I board with Denis. Still I have some prints on the wall there, and other things. I must go out to visit a few of the sick, and some others as well. Write to me soon and have a good time.

Greet Mauve for me when you see him, and the Roos family.

Spring is coming, for the larks are heard, and in the wood the branches and buds begin to sprout, especially of the elder trees; but when father was here everything was covered with snow, so that he has seen the curious effect of the black charbonnages and the many black chimneys in the snow. There are many places here that remind one of that drawing by Bosboom, "Chaudfontaine."

à Dieu, a handshake in thought, and believe me,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

129

Dear Theo, Wasmes April 1879.

It is time that you hear from me again. From home I heard that you had been a few days in Etten and that you were on a business trip. I heartily hope you have had a good journey. I suppose some of these days you will be in the dunes and in Scheveningen now and then. Here it is also very attractive in Spring, there are spots where one could almost fancy oneself in the dunes, because of the hills. Not long ago I made a very interesting expedition, namely I was for six hours in a mine.

It was one of the oldest and most dangerous mines in the neighbourhood, called Marcasse. That mine has a bad reputation, because many perish in it, either in descending or ascending, or by the poisoned air, or by gas explosion, or by the water in the ground,

or by the collapse of old tunnels, etc. It is a gloomy spot, and at first sight everything around looks dreary and desolate.

Most of the miners are thin and pale from fever and look tired and emaciated, weather beaten and aged before their time, the women, as a whole, faded and worn. Around the mine are poor miners' huts with a few dead trees black from smoke, and thorn hedges, dung-hills, and ash dumps, heaps of useless coal, etc. Maris could make a beautiful picture of it.

I will try to make a little sketch of it presently to give you an idea of how it looks.

I had a good guide, a man who has already worked for 33 years there, a kind and patient man, who explained everything well and tried to make it clear to me.

So we went down together, 700 metres deep, and explored the most hidden corners of that underworld. The "maintenages" or "gredins" (cells where the miners work) which are situated farthest from the exit are called "des caches."

This mine has five floors, the three upper ones are exhausted and abandoned, and they no longer work there, because there is no more coal. If anyone would try to make a picture of the "maintenages" that would be something new and unheard of, or rather never seen. Imagine a row of cells in a rather narrow and low passage supported by rough timber. In each of those cells a miner, in a coarse linen suit, filthy and black like a chimney-sweep, is busy cutting coal by the pale light of a small lamp. In some of those cells the miner stands erect, in others he lies on the ground; (⌊⌋⌊⌋⌊⌋⌊⌋⌊⌋ tailles à droit, ⌊⌋⌊⌋⌊⌋⌊⌋ tailles à plat). The arrangement is more or less like the cells in a beehive, or like a dark gloomy passage in a prison underground, or like a row of small weaving looms, or rather more like a row of bakers' ovens such as the peasants have, or like the partitions in a vault. The tunnels themselves are like the big chimneys of the Brabant peasants.

In some the water leaks through, and the light of the miner's lamp makes a curious effect, and is reflected like in a grotto of stalactite. Some of the miners work in the "maintenages," others load the cut coal in small carts, that are run along rails, like a tramway, this is done especially by children, boys as well as girls. There is also a stable yard down there, 700 metres underground, with about seven old horses, that transport a great many of those

carts and bring them to the so-called " accrochage," that is the place where they are pulled up to the surface. Other miners are repairing the old passages to prevent their tumbling down, or they are making new passages in the coal vein. As the mariners ashore are homesick for the sea, notwithstanding all the dangers and troubles that threaten them, so feels the miner, he would rather be underground than above it. The villages here look desolate and dead and forsaken, because life is going on underground instead of above. One might live here for years, but if one had not been down in the mines, one would not have a just idea of the real state of things.

People here are very ignorant and untaught, most of them cannot read, but at the same time they are intelligent and quick in their difficult work, brave and frank, of small stature but square shouldered with melancholy deep-set eyes. They are handy in many things, and work terribly hard. They have a nervous temperament, I do not mean weak, but very sensitive. They have an innate, deeply rooted hatred, and a deep mistrust of everybody who would try to domineer over them. With the charcoal-burners one must have a charcoal-burner's character and temperament, and no pretentious pride or mastery, or one would never get on with them or gain their confidence.

Did I tell you, at the time, about the miner who was so badly hurt by a gas explosion? Thank God, he has recovered and goes out again, and begins to walk some distance just for exercise, his hands are still weak, and it will be some time before he will be able to use them for his work, but he is out of danger. But since that time there have been many cases of typhoid and malignant fever, of what they call " la sotte fièvre," that gives them bad dreams like nightmare, and makes them delirious. So there are again many sickly and bedridden people, emaciated, weak, and miserable.

In one house they are all ill with fever, and they have little or no help, so that the patients have to nurse the patients, " Ici ces malades qui soignent les malades," said a woman, like they say, " Le pauvre est l'ami du pauvre."

Have you seen some beautiful pictures lately? I am longing for a letter from you.

Has Israëls done much of late, and Maris and Mauve?

A few days ago a colt was born here in the stable, a pretty little

animal that soon stood firm on his legs. The miners keep many goats here, and there are kids in every house, rabbits are also very common here in the miners' houses.

I must go out to visit some patients so I must finish. When you have time let me have a word from you soon, as a sign of life. My compliments to the Roos family, and to Mauve when you meet him. Many good wishes, and believe me always, with a hand-shake in thought,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

To descend in a mine is a very unpleasant sensation, one goes in a kind of basket or cage, like a bucket in a well, but in a well of 500–700 metres deep, so that in looking upward from the bottom one sees daylight about the size of a star in the sky.

One has a feeling like being for the first time on a ship at sea, but it is worse, only luckily it does not last long. The miners get used to it, but yet they keep an unconquerable feeling of horror and fear, that stays with them, and not without reason or right.

But once being down the worst is over, and one is richly rewarded for the trouble by what one sees.

My address is—Vincent van Gogh, Care of Jean Baptiste Denis,

Rue de petit Wasmes,

Wasmes (Borinage, Hainaut).

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Dear Theo, Wasmes June 1879.

It is already late, almost twelve o'clock, but I want to write to you before the day is over. In the first place because it is so long ago since I wrote you,—but my dear fellow what shall I write,—I am head over ears in work here, so that the days pass without my having time to think of, or to keep an interest in many things that used to be attractive to me. But what urges me to write you is that I heard from home that you have had an offer to go for six weeks to Paris. If you go there you pass the Borinage.

I wanted you to consider spending a day, or more if possible,

here. I should so much like to have you know this country too, because it has so many peculiarities for one who knows how to look at things attentively. For to one who had never seen a village by the sea, would it not be interesting to see Scheveningen or Katwyk, or any other such village? Well, there is no sea here, but the character of everything is interesting and worthy of notice. So then if you feel inclined, and can find the time and opportunity, stay over here, but do write beforehand when you are coming and where, at which station I shall find you, on what train.

I shall give this letter to mother when she comes, for in all probability I will meet her when she comes back from Paris.[1] I am longing to see her.

Happily for Uncle the danger seems over for the present. The tidings of Frans Soek's death touched me deeply; if you know any particulars I should like to hear them from you. Poor fellow, his life has not been an easy one, for he has had many struggles.

A few days ago we had a very heavy thunderstorm here at about eleven o'clock in the evening; quite near our house there is a spot from where one can see far below in the distance a great part of the Borinage, with the chimneys, the mounds of coal, the little miners' cottages, the scurrying to and fro of the little black figures by day, like ants in a nest, far away in the distance dark pine woods with little white cottages silhouetted against them, a few church spires a way off, an old mill, etc. Generally there is a kind of haze hanging over all, or there is a fantastic effect of light and dark formed by the shadows of the clouds, that reminds one of the pictures of Rembrandt, or Michel or Ruysdael.

But during that thunderstorm, in the pitch dark night there was a curious effect made by the flashes of lightning, which now and then rendered everything visible for a moment. Near by the large gloomy buildings of the mine, Marcasse, standing alone, isolated in the open field, reminding one indeed that night of the huge bulk of Noah's Ark, as it must have looked in the terrible pouring rain and the darkness of the Flood, illuminated by a flash of lightning. Under the impression of that thunderstorm, I gave to-night in a Bible lecture the description of a shipwreck.

I often read "Uncle Tom's Cabin," these days,—there is so

[1] Their mother had been called to Paris, where Uncle Vincent on his way to the south had fallen dangerously ill.

much slavery still in the world,—and in that remarkably wonderful book that important question is treated with so much wisdom, so much love, and such zeal and interest for the true welfare of the poor oppressed, that one comes back to it again and again, and always finds new things in it.

I still can find no better definition for the word Art, than this, " L'art c'est l'homme ajouté à la nature," nature, reality, truth, but with a significance, a conception, a character, which the artist brings out in it, and to which he gives expression, " qu'il dégage," which he disentangles, and makes free and clears up.

A picture by Mauve, or Maris or Israëls speaks more, and speaks more clearly than nature itself. With books it is the same, and in " Uncle Tom's Cabin " especially, the artist has put things in a new light, and in this book, though it is becoming an old book already, that is, written years ago, all things have become new. The sentiment in it is so fine, it is so elaborate, it is so masterly. It is written with so much love, so much seriousness, so faithfully. It is so humble and simple, but at the same time so truly sublime, so noble and refined.

I read the other day a book about the English coal district, but it did not give many particulars. Enclosed is a woodcut for your collection.

The other day I made the acquaintance of somebody who has been for many years foreman over the miners. He is of humble origin and is a self-made man. Now he has a lung disease, serious enough, and cannot stand any longer the terrible fatiguing work down in the mine. It is very interesting to hear him speak about all those things relating to the mines. He has always remained a friend of the miner (contrary to so many others, who have also got on, but for the sake of money and not for the sake of real distinction, and urged by less noble and very often mean motives). He has the heart of a labourer, faithful, and honest, and brave, but he is by far superior to most of them as regards intellectual development. More than once on the occasion of a strike, he was the only person who had any influence then on the miners. They would listen to nobody, they would follow nobody's advice but his, and nobody was obeyed in the critical moment but he alone. When I met him for the first time I thought of the etching by Meissonier, that we know so well,

"Le Liseur." One of the boys of Denis is about to become engaged to his daughter, that is the reason he visits here at the house now and then, though rarely, and so I made his acquaintance. Since then I visited him a few times. Have you ever read Legouvé, "Les Pères et les Enfants"? It is a remarkable book. I found it at his house and read it with interest.

A few days ago I received a letter from the Rev. Jones of Isleworth, in which he writes about the building of little wooden churches here in the Borinage. Is that practicable, is it desirable? He is ready to work for that end, that is for the erection of the first of those little buildings. He even speaks of coming here in the autumn to talk it over, I heartily wish it may happen. If you have time, write me a line, and if you can, stop here when you go to Paris. At all events let me know, if possible, in what train you will pass the station nearest to Wasmes, for then I will try to be there. Blessing on your work, believe me always,

Your loving brother,

Vincent.

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Dear Theo, Cuesmes August 5 1879.

I write to you in a great hurry, is not the time soon at hand for you to go to Paris? If so write me the day, and the hour, and in all probability I will see you at the station.

If you have time to stay over a day, or more or less, I should be very happy.

I would have some drawings to show you, types from here, it wouldn't be worth while for you to leave the train for those alone, but you would easily find something to attract you in the scenery here, and in the curious aspect of things, as there is such a picturesque character in everything in this neighbourhood.

Did you ever read Dickens's "Les Temps difficiles," I give you the title in French because there is a very good French translation at fr. 1.25 published by Hachette: Bibliotheque des meillures Romans étrangers. It is excellent, there is a figure in it of a working man, Stephen Blackpool, who is most striking and sympathetic.

I was in Brussels recently, and in Maria Hoorebeeke and in Tournay, partly on foot.

For the present I am at the following address:—M. Frank, Evangelist at Cuesmes (near Mons) au Marais.

There has been much thunder here lately. Do try, dear fellow, and arrange to stay over an hour or so.

Lately I have been at a studio again, namely at the Rev. Pietersen's who paints in the manner of Schelfhout or Hoppenbrouwers, and has good ideas about art.

He asked me for one of my sketches, a miner type. Often I am drawing until late in the night, to keep some souvenirs, and to strengthen the thoughts raised involuntarily by the aspect of things here.

But, boy, I have no more time, I had to write to Mr. Tersteeg to thank him for the box of paints he sent me, and the sketch book, which is almost half-full already.

In Brussels I bought from a Jewish book dealer another big sketch book with old Dutch paper.

Shall I see you then? How welcome you would be. I promise you Dickens's " Les Temps difficiles " if you will come to fetch it, but otherwise I will send it to you when I have an opportunity. à Dieu. A handshake in thought, and believe me always,

Yours truly,

Vincent.

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Dear Theo, (October 15 1879).

It is especially to tell you how thankful I am for your visit that I write to you. It was rather long ago since we had seen each other or written, as we used to do. Still it is better to be friends than to be dead to each other, the more so because, as long as one is not really dead, it seems a sham, or at least childish to pretend to be so. Childish in the way of a young man of fourteen, who thinks that his rank in society, and his dignity oblige him to wear a top hat.

The hours that we have spent together have given us at least the assurance that we both are still in the land of the living. When I

saw you again, and walked with you, I had the selfsame feeling, which I used to have, more than now, as if life were something good and precious, which one must value, and I felt more cheerful and alive than I had done for a long time, because gradually life has become less precious, much more unimportant and indifferent to me, at least it seemed so. When one lives with others and is united by a feeling of affection, one is aware of a reason for living, and one perceives that one is not quite worthless and superfluous, but perhaps good for something, because we need each other, and make the same journey as travelling companions; but that feeling of proper self-esteem also depends very much on our relations to others.

A prisoner who is forced to loneliness, who would not be allowed to walk, etc., would in the long run, especially if it lasted too long, suffer from the consequences, as certainly as a man who fasted too long. Like everyone else I feel the need of relations and friendship, of affection, of friendly intercourse, and I am not made of stone, or of iron, like a street pump or a lantern pole, so I cannot miss these things without feeling, like any other intelligent and honest man, a void and deep need. I tell you this to let you know how much good your visit has done me.

And as I hope that we too will not be estranged from each other, I hope the same may be true in regard to all at home.

But for the moment I do not feel very much like going back there and I am strongly inclined to stay here. But perhaps the fault is mine, and you may be right, that I do not see it well; so it may be, that notwithstanding my strong repugnance, and notwithstanding that it will be a hard road to take, I will go to Etten for at least a few days.

When I gratefully remember your visit, of course I also think again of our discussions. I have heard them before even a great many of them and often. Plans for amelioration and change, and raising of energy,—and yet, do not be angry with me, but I am a little afraid,—because I sometimes followed them, and the result was poor. How many things have been discussed that yet proved to be impracticable.

How fresh lies in my memory that time spent in Amsterdam. You were there yourself, so you know how things were planned and discussed, argued and considered, talked over with wisdom,

with the best intentions, and yet how miserable was the result, how ridiculous the whole undertaking, how utterly foolish. I shudder still when I think of it.

It is the worst time I ever lived through. How desirable and attractive have become the difficult days, full of care here in this poor country, in these uncivilized surroundings, compared to that. I fear a similar thing will be the result of following wise advice given with the best intentions.

Such experiences are too dreadful, the harm, the sorrow, the affliction is too great, not to try on either side to become wiser by this dearly bought experience. If we do not learn from this, then from what shall we learn? To try "to reach the goal, which was set before me," as the expression then was; indeed it is an aim which I no longer desire, the ambition for it has greatly abated, and even if it looked and sounded well then, now I look at those things from another point of view which experience taught me, although it is not allowed to have that opinion about them.

Not allowed, aye, just as Frank the Evangelist thought it reprehensible in me, to assert that the sermons of the Rev. John Andry are but little more Evangelic than those of a Roman Catholic priest. I would rather die a natural death than to be prepared for it by the Academy, and I sometimes have had a lesson from a hay-mower that was of more use to me than one in Greek.

To better my life,—don't you think I eagerly desire it, or should I not need it? I wish I were much better than I am. But just because I long for it, I am afraid of remedies that are worse than the evil itself. Can you blame a patient for wanting to have the right doctor and not to be treated wrongly or by a quack?

Is it wrong for somebody who has consumption or typhoid to think a stronger medicine than gruel would be more effective, even necessary, or even thinking the gruel itself not bad, may he not doubt its efficiency and power to cure his particular case?

The doctor who gave the receipe for gruel must not say, this patient is obstinate and will kill himself, because he will not take any medicine—no, for the man is not unwilling, but the so-called medicine was no good, it was not the right thing.

Do you think a person is wrong when he remains indifferent before a picture mentioned in the catalogue like Memlinck's but that has nothing to do with Memlinck, except that it is a like

subject from the Gothic period, but without any artistic value? And now if you would make out from what I say, that I wanted to call you a quack, because of your advice, you would quite have misunderstood me, as I do not think that of you at all. On the other hand you would also be mistaken if you thought that I would do well to follow your advice literally, of becoming an engraver of bill-headings and visiting cards, or a book-keeper or a carpenter's apprentice,—or else to devote myself to the baker's trade,—or many similar things (curiously different to combine) that other people advise me. But, you say: I do not give that advice for you to follow it literally, but because I was afraid you were rather fond of spending your days in idleness, and because my opinion was that you must put an end to this.

May I observe that this "idleness" is rather a strange sort of idleness. It is somewhat difficult for me to defend myself against this, but I should be very sorry if, sooner or later, you could not see it in a different light. Neither do I know if it would be right for me to refute such an accusation, by following such advice as of becoming a baker for instance. That would indeed be a decisive answer (always supposing that it were possible to adopt quick as lightning the form of a baker, a barber or a librarian), but it would be at the same time a foolish answer, resembling more or less the action of a man, who, when reproached with cruelty for riding a donkey, immediately dismounted and continued his way with the donkey on his shoulders. And now putting all jesting aside, I really think it would be better if the relation between us became more friendly on both sides. If I really had to think that I were troublesome to you, or to the people at home, or were in your way, of no good to anyone, and if I should be obliged to feel like an intruder or an outcast, so that I had better be dead, and if I should have to try to keep out of your way more and more,—if I thought this really were the case, a feeling of anguish would overwhelm me, and I should have to struggle against despair. This is a thought I can hardly bear, and still harder to bear is the thought that so much discord, misery and trouble between us, and in our home, is caused by me. If it were indeed so, then I might wish that I had not to live much longer. But when this thought sometimes depresses me beyond belief—almost too deeply—then after a long time there rises simultaneously the thought: perhaps it is only a

bad terrible dream, and later on we will perhaps learn to understand, and look at things in a better way. But is it not after all the truth and will it not get worse instead of better? Many people would undoubtedly think it foolish and superstitious to believe still in a change for the better.—Sometimes it is in winter so bitingly cold that one says: it is too cold, what do I care if there is a summer to follow, the evil surpasses by far the good. But with or without our permission, there comes an end at last to the bitter frost and on a certain morning the wind has turned and we have a thaw. Comparing the state of the weather to our state of mind and our circumstances,—subject to changes and variety like the weather—I have still some hope left for a change for the better. If you write to me soon again I shall be very glad. Address your letter care of J. B. Denis, Rue du Petit Wasmes, à Wasmes (Hainaut).

The evening after your departure I walked to Wasmes. I have drawn yet another portrait since. à Dieu, a handshake in thought, and believe me,

Yours truly,

Vincent.

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July 1880.

My Dear Theo, (Written originally in French.)

It is rather with reluctance that I write to you, not having done so since so long, for many reasons.

To a certain degree you have become a stranger to me, and I have become the same to you, more than you may think; perhaps it would be better for us not to continue this way. It is likely I would not have written to you even now, if I were not under the obligation and the necessity of doing so, if you yourself had not given me cause. I learned at Etten that you had sent fr. 50 for me, well I have accepted them. Certainly with reluctance, certainly with a rather melancholy feeling, but I am up against a stone wall, and in a sort of mess. How can I do otherwise? So it is to thank you for them that I write to you.

Perhaps you know I am back in the Borinage; father would rather have me stay in the neighbourhood of Etten; I refused, and I think I acted in this for the best.

Involuntarily, I have become in the family more or less a kind of impossible and suspect personage, at least somebody whom they do not trust, so how could I in any way be of any use to anybody?

Therefore above all, I think the best thing and the most reasonable for me to do, is to go away, and keep at a convenient distance, so that I cease to exist for you all.

What moulting time is for the birds—the time when they change their feathers—so adversity or misfortune is the difficult time for us human beings. One can stay in it, in that time of moulting, one can also come out of it renewed, but anyhow it must not be done in public and it is not at all amusing, therefore the only thing to do is to hide oneself. Well, be it so.

Now, though it is a very difficult and almost impossible thing to regain the confidence of a whole family, that is not quite free from prejudices, and other qualities as fashionable and honourable, yet I do not quite despair of the fact that by and by, slowly but surely, a cordial understanding may be renewed between some of us.

And in the very first place, I should like to see that "cordiale entente" not to put it stronger, re-established between father and me, and I desire no less to see it re-established between us two.

"Entente cordiale" is infinitely better than misunderstandings. Now I must bore you with certain abstract things, but I hope you will listen patiently to them. I am a man of passions, capable of and subject to doing more or less foolish things, of which I happen to repent, more or less, afterwards. Now and then I speak and act too quickly, when it would have been better to wait patiently. I think other people sometimes commit the same imprudences. Well, this being the case, what must be done? Must I consider myself a dangerous man, incapable of anything? I do not think so. But the question is to try by all means to put those selfsame passions to a good use. For instance, to name one of the passions. I have a more or less irresistible passion for books, and I want continually to instruct myself, to study if you like, just as much as I want to eat my bread. *You* certainly will be able to understand this. When I was in other surroundings, in the surroundings of pictures and things of art, you know how I then had a violent passion for them, that reached the highest pitch of enthusiasm. And I do not repent it, for even now, *far from that land, I am often homesick for the land of pictures.*

You remember perhaps that I knew well (and perhaps I know it still) who Rembrandt was, or Millet, or Jules Dupré or Delacroix or Millais or M. Maris. Well—now I do not have those surroundings any more,—yet that thing that is called soul, they say it never dies, but it lives always, and goes on searching always and always and forever. So instead of giving way to this homesickness I said to myself: that land, or the fatherland is everywhere. So instead of yielding to despair, I chose the part of active melancholy, in so far as I possessed the power of activity, in other words I preferred the melancholy that hopes and aspires, and seeks, to that which despairs in stagnation and woe. So I studied more or less seriously the books within my reach like the Bible, and the "French Revolution" by Michelet, and last winter, Shakespeare and a few of Victor Hugo and Dickens, and Beecher Stowe, and lately "Eschylus," and then several others, less classical, several great "little masters." You know that among those "little masters" are people like Fabritius or Bida.

Now he who is absorbed in all this, is sometimes "choquant," shocking to others, and unwillingly sins more or less against certain forms and customs and social conventions.

It is a pity however when this is taken in bad part. For instance you know that I have often neglected my appearance, this I admit, and I admit that it is shocking. But look here, poverty and want have their share in the cause, and then a deep discouragement comes in too for a part, and then it is sometimes a good way to assure oneself the necessary solitude for concentration on some study that preoccupies one.

A very necessary study is that of medicine, there is scarcely anybody who does not try to know a little of it, who does not try to understand what it is about, and you see I do not know as yet one word about it. But all this absorbs and preoccupies one, all this gives one something to dream about, to reflect, to think. Now for more than five years already, I do not know exactly how long, I am more or less without employment, wandering here and there; you say: since a certain time you have gone down, you have deteriorated, you have not done anything. Is this quite true?

It is true that now and then I have earned my crust of bread, now and then a friend has given it to me in charity. I have lived

as I could, as luck would have it, haphazardly, it is true that I have lost the confidence of many, it is true that my financial affairs are in a sad state, it is true that the future is only too sombre, it is true that I might have done better, it is true that just for earning my bread I've lost time, it is true that even my studies are in a rather sad and hopeless condition, and that my needs are greater, infinitely greater than my possessions. But is this what you call going down, is this what you call doing nothing? You will say perhaps: but why did you not continue as they wanted you to do, they wanted you to continue by way of the University? My only answer to this is: the expenses were too heavy, and besides, that future was not much better than the one on the road now before me.

But on the path I have taken now I must keep going; if I don't do anything, if I do not study, if I do not go on seeking any longer, then I am lost. Then woe is me.

That is how I look at it; to continue, to continue, that is what is necessary. But you will ask: What is your definite aim? That aim becomes more definite, will stand out slowly and surely, as the rough draught becomes a sketch, and the sketch becomes a picture, little by little, by working seriously on it, by pondering over the idea, vague at first, over the thought that was fleeting and passing, till it gets fixed. I must tell you that it is with Evangelists as with artists. There is an old academic school, often detestable, tyrannical, the accumulation of horrors, men who wear a cuirass, a steel armour of prejudices and conventions; those people, when they are at the head of affairs, dispose of positions, and by a rotary system they try to keep their protégés in their places, and to exclude the other man. Their God is like the God of Shakespeare's drunken Falstaff, "le dedans d'une église," indeed some of those Evangelical gentlemen find themselves by a curious chance having the same point of view on spiritual things as that drunken type (perhaps they would be somewhat surprised to find it so, if they were capable of human emotions). But there is little fear of their blindness ever changing to clear-sightedness in those matters.

This state of affairs has its bad side for him who does not agree with all this, but who protests against it with all his soul, and all his heart, and all the indignation of which he is capable. I for my part respect academicians, that are not like those academicians, but the respectable ones are more rare than one would believe at

first. Now one of the reasons why I am out of employment now, why I have been out of employment for years, is simply that I have other ideas than the gentlemen who give the places to men who think like they do. It is not a simple question of dress as they have hypocritically reproached me, it is a much more serious question, I assure you.

Why do I tell you all this,—not to complain, not to excuse myself for things in which I may have more or less been wrong, but simply to tell you this: during your visit last summer, when we walked together near the abandoned pit which they call La Sorcière you reminded me that there had been a time when we two also walked together near the old canal and mill of Ryswyk, "and then," you said, "we agreed in many things," but you added, "since then you have changed so much, you are not the same any longer." Well, that is not quite true. What has changed is that my life was then less difficult, and my future seemed less dark, but as to the inward state, as to my way of looking at things, and my way of thinking, that has not changed. If there has been any change at all, it is that I think and believe and love more seriously now what I already thought and believed and loved then.

So you would be wrong in persisting to believe that for instance I should now be less enthusiastic for Rembrandt, or Millet, or Delacroix, or whoever it may be, for the contrary is true. But you see, there are many things which one must believe and love. There is something of Rembrandt in Shakespeare, and of Corregio in Michelet, and of Delacroix in Victor Hugo, and then there is something of Rembrandt in the Gospel, or in the Gospel something of Rembrandt, as you like it, it comes to the same, if one only understands the thing in the right way, without misinterpreting it and reckoning with the equivalence of the comparisons, which do not pretend to lessen the merits of the original personalities. And in Bunyan there is something of Maris or of Millet, and in Beecher Stowe there is something of Ary Scheffer.

If now you can forgive a man for making a thorough study of pictures, admit also that the love of books is as sacred as the love of Rembrandt, and I even think the two complete each other.

I am very fond of the portrait of a man by Fabritius, which one day, when we were walking together, we stood looking at a long while in the museum of Haarlem. Yes, but I am as fond of

Sydney Carton, in the "Tale of Two Cities" by Dickens, and I could show you other figures as curiously striking in other books, with more or less remarkable resemblance. And I think that Kent, a character in Shakespeare's "King Lear," is as noble and distinguished a personage as a figure by Th. de Keyser, though Kent and King Lear have lived in a much earlier period. Not to say any more about it. My God, how beautiful Shakespeare is! Who is mysterious like him? His language and style can indeed be compared to an artist's brush, quivering with fever and emotion. But one must learn to read, as well as one must learn to see, and learn to live.

So you must not think that I disavow things; I am rather faithful in my unfaithfulness, and though changed, I am the same, and my only anxiety is: how can I be of use in the world, cannot I serve some purpose and be of any good, how can I learn more and study profoundly certain subjects? You see, that is what preoccupies me constantly, and then I feel myself imprisoned by poverty, excluded from participating in certain work, and certain necessary things are beyond my reach. That is one reason for not being without melancholy, and then one feels an emptiness where there might be friendship and strong and serious affections, and one feels a terrible discouragement gnawing at one's very moral energy, and fate seems to put a barrier to the instincts of affection, and a flood of disgust rises to choke one. And one exclaims "How long, my God!"

Well, what shall I say; our inward thoughts, do they ever show outwardly? There may be a great fire in our soul, and no one ever comes to warm himself at it, and the passers by see only a little bit of smoke coming through the chimney, and pass on their way. Now, look here, what must be done, must one tend that inward fire, have salt in oneself, wait patiently yet with how much impatience for the hour when somebody will come and sit down near it,—to stay there maybe? Let him who believes in God wait for the hour that will come sooner or later.

Now for the moment it seems things go very badly with me, and this has been so already for a considerable time, and it may continue so in the future for a while; but after everything seemed to go wrong, there will perhaps come a time when things will go right. I do not count on it, perhaps it will never happen, but in

case there comes a change for the better, I would consider it so much gain, I would be contented, I would say: at last! you see *there was something after all!* But you will say: "Yet you are an intolerable being, because you have impossible ideas about religion and childish scruples of conscience." If my ideas are impossible or childish I hope to get rid of them, I ask no better. But look here at what I think on the subject. You will find in "Le Philosophe sous les Toits," by Souvestre, how a man of the people, a simple miserable labourer pictures to himself his own country. "You have perhaps never thought what is really your own country," he said putting his hand on my shoulder; "it is everything that surrounds you, everything that has brought you up and nourished you, everything you have loved, those fields that you see, those houses, those trees, those young girls that laugh while they pass, that is your country! The laws that protect you, the bread with which your labour is paid, the words you speak, the joy and the sorrow that come to you from the people and the things among which you live, that is your country! The little room where you used to see your mother, the memories which she has left you, the earth in which she reposes, that is your country! You see it, you breathe it everywhere! Figure to yourself the rights and the duties, the affections and the needs, the memories and the gratitude, gather all that under one name, and that name will be your country."

Now in the same way I think that everything that is really good and beautiful, of inward moral, spiritual and sublime beauty in men, and their works, comes from God, and that all that is bad and wrong in men and in their works, is not of God, and God does not approve of it.

But I always think, that the best way to know God is to love many things. Love a friend, a wife, something, whatever you like, you will be in the right way to know more about it, that is what I say to myself. But one must love with a lofty and serious intimate sympathy, with strength, with intelligence, and one must always try to know deeper, better and more. That leads to God, that leads to unwavering faith.

To give you an example: someone loves Rembrandt, but seriously,—that man will know that there is a God, he will surely believe it. Someone studies the history of the French Revolution,—

he will not be unbelieving, he will see that also in great things there is a sovereign power manifesting itself.

Somebody has followed maybe for a short time a free course at the great University of misery, and has paid attention to the things he sees with his eyes, and hears with his ears, and has thought them over; he too, will end in believing, and he will perhaps have learned more than he can tell. To try to understand the real significance of what the great artists, the serious masters, tell us in their masterpieces, *that* leads to God. One man has written or told it in a book, another in a picture. Then simply read the Gospel and the Bible, that makes you think, and think much, and think all the time. Well, think much and think all the time, that unconsciously raises your thoughts above the ordinary level. We know how to read, well let us read then!

It is true that there may be moments in which one becomes somewhat absent-minded, somewhat visionary; there are those who become too absent-minded, too visionary. This is perhaps the case with me, but it is my own fault; after all maybe there is some excuse, it was for some reason that I was absorbed, preoccupied, troubled, but one overcomes this. The dreamer sometimes falls in a well, but is said to get out of it afterwards. And the absent-minded man has also, in compensation, his lucid intervals. He is sometimes a person who has his reasons for being as he is, but those are not always understood at first, or are unconsciously forgotten most of the time, from lack of interest. A man who has been tossed to and fro a long time, as if he were tossed on a stormy sea, at last reaches his destination, a man who has seemed good for nothing and incapable of any employment, any function, ends in finding one, and becoming active and capable of action, he shows himself quite different from what he seemed at first. I write somewhat at random whatever comes to my pen. I should be very glad if you could see in me something besides an idle fellow.

Because there are two kinds of idleness, that form a great contrast. There is the man who is idle from laziness, and from lack of character, from the baseness of his nature. You may if you like take me for such an one.

Then there is the other idle man, who is idle in spite of himself, who is inwardly consumed by a great longing for action, who does nothing, because it is impossible for him to do anything, because

he seems to be imprisoned in some cage, because he does not possess what he needs to make him productive, because the fatality of circumstances brings him to that point, such a man does not always know what he could do, but he feels by instinct: yet I am good for something, my life has an aim after all, I know that I might be quite a different man! How can I then be useful, of what service can I be! There is something inside of me, what can it be!

This is quite a different kind of idle man; you may if you like take me for such an one. A caged bird in spring knows quite well that he might serve to some end; he feels quite well that there is something for him to do, but he cannot do it. What is it? He does not remember quite well. Then he has some vague ideas and says to himself, "The others make their nests and lay their eggs and bring up their little ones," and then he knocks his head against the bars of the cage. But the cage stands there and the bird is maddened by anguish.

"Look at the lazy animal," says another bird that passes by, "he seems to be living at his ease." Yes the prisoner lives, he does not die, there are no outward signs of what passes within him, his health is good, he is more or less gay when the sun shines. But then comes the season of migration. Attacks of melancholia, —"but he has got everything he wants," say the children that tend him in his cage,—but he looks through the bars at the overcast sky, where a thunderstorm is gathering, and he inwardly rebels against his fate. "I am caged, I am caged, and you tell me I do not want anything, fools! You think I have everything I need! Oh! I beseech you, liberty, to be a bird like other birds!"

A certain idle man resembles this idle bird.

And men are often prevented by circumstances from doing things, a prisoner in I do not know what horrible, horrible, most horrible cage. There is also, I know it, the deliverance, the tardy deliverance. A just or unjustly ruined reputation, poverty, fatal circumstances, adversity, that is what makes men prisoners.

One cannot always tell what it is, that keeps us shut in, confines us, seems to bury us, but, however, one feels certain barriers, certain gates, certain walls. Is all this imagination, fantasy? I do not think so. And then one asks: "My God! is it for long, is it for ever, is it for eternity!" Do you know what frees one from this captivity? it is every deep serious affection. Being friends, being

brothers, love, that is what opens the prison by supreme power, by some magic force. But without this one remains in prison.

There where sympathy is renewed, life is restored.

And the prison is also called prejudice, misunderstanding, fatal ignorance of one thing or another, distrust, false shame.

But to speak of other things, if I have come down in the world, you on the contrary have risen. If I have lost sympathies, you on the contrary have gained them. That makes me very happy, I say it in all sincerity, and it will always do so. If you were but little serious, and with but little depth, I would fear that it would not last, but as I think you are very serious and of great depth, I believe that it will last. But I should be very glad if it were possible for you to see in me something else than an idle man of the worst type.

Then if ever I can do anything for you, be of some use to you, know that I am at your disposal. If I have accepted what you have given me, you might, in case I could render you some service, ask it of me; it would make me happy, and I would consider it a proof of confidence. We are rather far apart, and we have perhaps different views on some things, but nevertheless there may come an hour, there may come a day, when we may be of service to one another.

For the present I shake hands with you, thanking you again for the help you have given me.

If sooner or later you wish to write to me, my address is, care of Ch. Decrucq, Rue du Pavillon 8, Cuesmes, near Mons. And know that a letter from you will do me good.

Ever Yours,

Vincent.

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Dear Theo, Cuesmes August 20 1880.

If I am not mistaken you must still have "Les Travaux des Champs," by Millet.

Would you be so kind as to lend them to me for a short time, and send them by mail?

I must tell you that I am busy copying large drawings after Millet, and that I have already finished, "Les Heures de la Journée" as well as "Le Semeur."

Well, perhaps if you saw them, you would not be altogether

dissatisfied with them. Now if you would send me "Les Travaux des Champs," you might perhaps add some other prints by, or after, Millet, Breton, Feyen Perrin, etc. Do not buy them on purpose, but lend me what you have.

Send me what you can, and do not fear for me. If I can only continue to work, that will somehow or other set me right again. But by doing this you will help me a great deal. If sooner or later you may take a trip to Holland, I hope that you will not pass by here without coming to see the sketches.

I write to you while I am busy drawing, and I am in a hurry to go back to it, so good night, and send me the prints as soon as possible, and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

C/o Charles Decrucq,

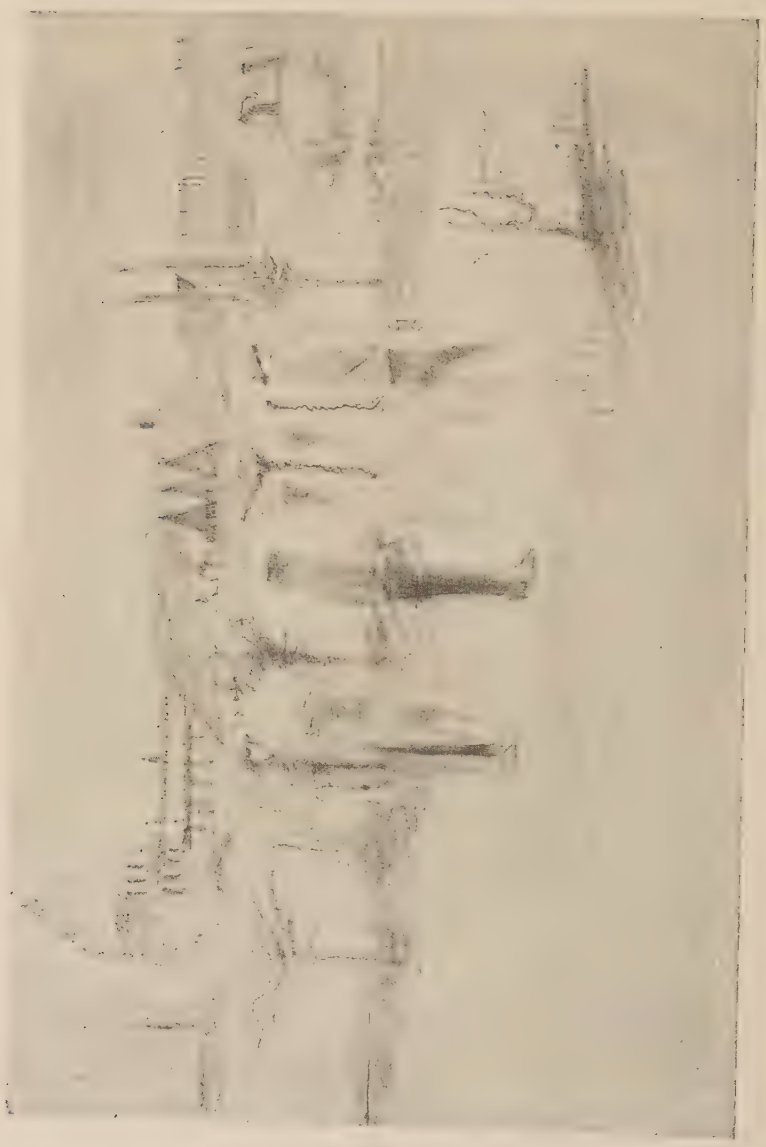
Rue du Pavillon 3, Cuesmes.[1]

The Millet's which I copied are, "Les Heures du Jour," the size is almost that of a page from the "Cours de Dessin Bargue." You will understand well enough what I want, without it being necessary for me to tell you, but still I will tell you, so that you may know what I really think.

It is especially studies of the figure like "Les Bêcheurs" by Millet, or the lithograph after his "Le Vanneur" and figures by Brion, Frère, or Feyen Perrin, or Jules Breton. I think that you might perhaps find just what I want at the Alliance des Arts, where they sell cheaply the lithographs of the contemporary artists. One print which I should like to have immensely is the large etching by Daubigny after Ruysdael, "Le Buisson," which is sold at the chalcography of the Louvre. I have sketched a drawing representing miners, men and women, going to the shaft in the morning through the snow, by a path along a hedge of thorns; shadows that pass, dimly visible in the twilight. In the background the large constructions of the mine, and the heaps of clinkers, stand out vaguely against the sky.

I send you a hasty sketch, so that you can see what it is like. But I feel the need of studying the drawing of figure from masters,

[1] This letter is undated.



like Millet, Breton, Brion, or Boughton, or others. What do you think of the sketch, do you think the idea good?

Among the photographs after J. Breton by Bingham, there is one if I remember well, that represents "Gleaners." Dark silhouettes against a sky with a red sunset. Well, these are the things which I want to study. It is because I think that you would rather see me doing some good work than doing nothing, that I write to you on this subject, and perhaps it might be a reason to restore the cordial entente and the sympathy between us, and make us of some use to one another. I should like very much to make that drawing over again, better than I have done it now. The *pendant* represents the return of the miners, but it did not turn out as well; it is very difficult, being an effect of brown silhouettes, just touched by light, against a mottled sunset.

Send me "Les Travaux des Champs," by return mail, if you can and will. I wrote a word to Mr. Tersteeg to ask him, if perhaps there was a chance of my having for a time the "Exercices au Fusain," by Bargue, that is to say the studies from the nude, which you know. I do not know whether he will send them or not, but in case he would not do so, could you not put in a word for me?

For those "Exercices au Fusain" would be of immense service to me. But perhaps he will do me the favour of sending me at least a few pages, if not the whole course.

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Dear Theo, Cuesmes Sept. 7 1880.

The prints, etchings, etc., which you sent me sometime ago, I received in good order, and I thank you very much.

You did me a great service by sending them.

I can tell you that I sketched the ten pages "Travaux des Champs" by Millet (almost the size of a page of "Cours de Dessins Bargue"), and that I have quite finished one. I should have done more but I wanted to make first the "Exercices au Fusain," by Bargue, which Mr. Tersteeg has kindly lent me, and I have now finished the sixty pages.

Besides I have made a drawing of "Evening Prayer," after the etching which you sent me.

I wish I could show them to you, to know your opinion about all this, as well as about some other drawings, for instance, a large sepia drawing, after Th. Rousseau, " Four dans les Landes." I had already made it twice in water-colour before I succeeded in finishing it.

As I told you already I should like very much to copy also " Le Buisson," by Ruysdael; you know those two landscapes are in the same style and sentiment.

I have been making rough sketches of these drawings, without advancing very much, but lately it seems to get better, and I have good hope that it will go better still. Especially because Mr. Tersteeg and you also have come to my aid with good models, for I think it is much better to copy, for the present, some good things, than to work without this basis. Yet I could not keep from sketching in rather a large size, the drawing of the miners going to the shaft, of which I sent you a hasty sketch, though changing a little the place of the figures. I hope that after having copied the other two series of Bargue I shall be able to draw miners, male and female, more or less well, if by chance I can have a model with ome character, and as to that there are plenty of them.

The lithograph of Bosboom's interior of a cow-barn is very beautiful. You understood my intentions perfectly, when you added to the collection, " Le Malaria," by Hébert.

If you still have the book with the etchings after Michel, please lend me that also some time, but there is no hurry. For the moment I have enough to keep me busy, but I should like to see those landscapes again, for now I look at things with other eyes than before I began to draw.

I hope that you will not be too dissatisfied with the drawings after Millet when you see them; those little woodcuts are admirable.

Because I have already twenty prints after Millet, you can understand that if you could send me some more I would readily make them, for I try to study that master seriously. I know that the large etching of " Les Bêcheurs," is rare, yet be on the lookout for it, and tell me for what price one could have it. Some day or other I will earn a few pennies with some drawings of miners, and I should like to have that print, as well as " Le Buisson," as soon as I am able to buy it, even if it is rather expensive. The other day I bought for fr. 2.50 two volumes of the " Musée Universel,"

in which I found a large number of interesting woodcuts, among others three of Millet's.

I cannot tell you the pleasure Mr. Tersteeg gave me in letting me have for a while the "Exercices au Fusain," and the "Cours de Dessin Bargue." On the first I worked almost a whole fortnight, from early morning until night, and from day to day I seem to feel that it invigorated my pencil. But with no less, but rather more eagerness, I am now copying "Les Travaux des Champs." I am now busy with "Les Tondeurs de Moutons."

Once more my hearty thanks for having sent them, and know that everything you can find of that artist will be of the greatest use to me. As to "The Sower" I have already drawn it five times, twice in small size, three times in large, and I will take it up again, I am so entirely absorbed by that figure. When sooner or later you write to me (which by way of distraction would be very welcome) could you tell me something about the etchings by A. Legros. If I remember well I saw a dozen of them when in England, and they were very beautiful. I finish for to-day. Thanking you over again, and with a handshake,

Vincent.

Receive my congratulations on the occasion of the 10th of September.

C/o Charles Decrucq,
3 Rue du Pavillon,
Cuesmes, near Mons.

These are the Millet's I have:

The Sower.
Evening Prayer.
Reapers Binding the Sheaves.
Woodcutter and His Wife in the Wood.
Fields in Winter.
Young Farmer.
Labour in the Fields, 10 pages.
The Hours of the Day, 4 pages.

Do you have still in your collection of woodcuts, an old woodcutter alone in the wood?

Dear Theo, Cuesmes Sept. 24 1880.

Your letter has done me good, I thank you for having written to me in that way. The roll containing a new collection of etchings and different prints has just arrived. Especially the splendid etching: "Le Buisson" by Daubigny and Ruysdael, *that is it*. I intend to make two drawings, either in sepia or in something else, one after that etching, the other after: "Le Four dans les Landes," by Th. Rousseau. That last sepia is already made,—it is true—but compared with the etching by Daubigny, you know it lacks power, though the sepia itself may already have some tone and sentiment. I must take it up again, and work on it. I work regularly on the "Cours de Dessin Bargue," and intend to finish it before I undertake anything else, for day by day it makes my hand as well as my mind more supple and strong, and I cannot be grateful enough to Mr. Tersteeg, for having lent it to me so generously. Those studies are excellent. Between times I am reading a book on anatomy, and another on perspective, which Mr. Tersteeg has also sent me. The study is very dry, and at times those books are terribly irritating, but still I think I do well to study them

So you see that I am in a rage of work, but for the moment it does not give very brilliant results. But I hope these thorns will bear their white blossoms in due time, and that this apparently sterile struggle is no other than the labour of childbirth. First the pain, then the joy.

You speak to me about Lessore. I think I remember very elegant water-colours of landscapes by him, in a blonde tone, of an apparently easy and light execution, yet correct and distinguée, of a somewhat decorative effect (decorative used here in a favourable sense). So I know something of his work, and you speak of someone who is not quite unknown to me. I love the portrait of Victor Hugo; it is very conscientiously done, with the evident intention of portraying the truth without any straining after effect.

This winter I have studied certain works by Hugo, among others the "Last Day of a Condemned Man," and a very beautiful book on Shakespeare. I took up the study of that author long ago; he is as beautiful as Rembrandt. Shakespeare is to Charles Dickens

or Victor Hugo, what Ruysdael is to Daubigny, and Rembrandt to Millet.

What you say in your letter about Barbizon is quite true, and I will tell you a few things, that will prove to you it is also my opinion. I have not seen Barbizon, but though I have not seen that, last winter I saw Courrières. I had undertaken a walking tour, mostly in the Pas de Calais, not la Manche, but the department or province. I had undertaken that trip, hoping perhaps to find there if possible some kind of work. I would have accepted anything. But after all perhaps I went involuntarily, I cannot exactly tell you why. I had said to myself, you must see Courrières. I had only fr. 10 in my pocket, and having started by taking the train, I was soon out of money, and as I was on the road for a week, I had a long weary walk of it. Anyhow I saw Courrières, and the outside of M. Jules Breton's studio. The outside of the studio was rather disappointing, as it was quite newly built of bricks, of a Methodist regularity, of an inhospitable, chilly and irritating aspect. If I could only have seen the interior, I would certainly not have given a thought to the exterior, I am sure of that. But what shall I say of the interior. I have not been able to catch a glimpse.

For I lacked the courage to enter and introduce myself. I looked elsewhere in Courrières for any traces of Jules Breton, or some other artist; the only thing I was able to discover was his picture at a photographer's, and in a dark corner of the old church a copy of Titian's "Burial of Christ," which in the shadow seemed to me to be very beautiful and of wonderful tone. Was it by him? I do not know, as I was unable to discern any signature.

But of any living artist, no trace; there was only a café called Café des Beaux-Arts, also built of new bricks, equally inhospitable, chilly and repelling; the said Café was decorated with a kind of fresco or mural painting, representing episodes in the life of the famous knight, Don Quixote. Those frescoes, I tell you in confidence, seemed to me a poor consolation, as they were more or less of inferior quality. I do not know who painted them.

But I have at least seen the country around Courrières, the haystacks, the brown earth or almost coffee coloured clay, with white spots here and there where the marl appears, which seems very unusual to us who are accustomed to black earth.

Then the French sky seemed to me very much more clear and limpid, than the smoky and foggy sky of the Borinage. Besides there were farms and sheds which, the Lord be praised, still retained their moss-grown thatched roofs, I also saw flocks of crows made famous by the pictures of Daubigny and Millet. Not mentioning in the first place, as I ought to have done, the characteristic and picturesque figures of the different travellers, diggers, woodcutters, peasants driving horses, and here and there a woman's silhouette in a white cap. Even in Courrières there was a charbonnage or mine. I saw the day shift coming up in the twilight, but there were no women in men's clothes as in the Borinage, only miners, with tired and miserable faces, blackened by the coal dust, clad in tattered miners' clothes, and one of them in an old soldier's cape. Though this trip was almost too much for me, and I came back from it overcome by fatigue, with sore feet, and in a more or less melancholy condition. I do not regret it, for I have seen interesting things and one learns to take a different but correct view of the hard ordeals of misery itself. I earned some crusts of bread along the road here and there, in exchange for some drawings which I had in my valise. But when the fr. 10 were all gone I had to spend the last nights in the open air, once in an abandoned wagon, which was white with frost the next morning—rather a bad resting place—once in a pile of fagots, and once, that was a little better, in a hay-stack, where I succeeded in making a rather more comfortable berth, but then a drizzling rain did not exactly further my well being.

Well, it was even in that deep misery that I felt my energy revive and that I said to myself: in spite of everything I shall rise again, I will take up my pencil, which I have forsaken in my great discouragement, and I will go on with my drawing; and from that moment everything seems transformed for me; and now I have started, and my pencil has become somewhat docile, becoming more so every day. It was the too long and too great poverty which had discouraged me so much, that I could not do anything.

Another thing which I saw during that excursion was the villages of the weavers.

The miners and the weavers form a race apart from the other labourers, and artisans, and I feel a great sympathy for them, and would be very happy if some day I could draw them, so that those

types unknown or so little known, would be brought before the eyes of the people.

The man from the depth of the abyss " de profundis," that is the miner, the other with his dreamy air, somewhat absent-minded, almost a somnambulist, that is the weaver. I have been living with them for two years, and I have learnt a little of their original character, at least especially that of the miners. And more and more often I find something touching and almost sad in those poor obscure labourers, of the lowest order so to say, and the most despised, that are generally represented as a race of criminals and thieves, by a perhaps vivid but very false and unjust imagination. Of course one finds here criminals, drunkards, and thieves, like anywhere else, but this is not at all the true type. In your letter you have talked vaguely of my coming sooner or later to Paris, or in the neighbourhood, if it were possible and if I wanted to. It would certainly be my great and ardent wish to go to Paris or to Barbizon, or elsewhere. But how could I, as I do not earn a cent, and though I work hard it will take some time before I shall have arrived at a point of being able to think of such a thing as coming to Paris, for indeed in order to be able to work as is necessary, I should need at least fr. 100 a month; one can live on less, but then it is hardship and even want.

Poverty prevents growth, that is the old proverb of Palissy, which has some truth in it, and which is perfectly true if one understands its real meaning and depth.

For the moment I do not see how the thing would be practicable, and it is better for me to stay here, working as much as I can, and after all it is cheaper to live here. But it is sure that I cannot go on very much longer in the little room where I am now. It is already a small room, and then there are two beds, one for the children and one for me. And now that I draw those Bargues which are rather large in size, I cannot tell you how it inconveniences me. I do not want to upset the people in their household arrangement, and they have told me already that I could by no means have the other room in the house, even if I paid more, for the woman needs it for her washing, which in the house of a miner has be to done almost every day.

So I would just like to take a little miner's house that costs about fr. 9 a month.

Though every day difficulties come up and new ones will present themselves, I cannot tell you how happy I am to have taken up drawing again. I have been thinking of it for a long time, but I always considered the thing impossible and beyond my reach. But now, though I feel my weakness and my painful dependency in many things, I have recovered my men al balance, and day by day my energy increases.

Now I will tell you my opinion about coming to Paris. If I could find an opportunity of forming a friendship with some good and worthy artist, that would be of great advantage to me. But to go there abruptly would only be a repetition on a large scale of my trip to Courrières, where I had hoped to meet some living specimen of an artist, but where I did not find any. The thing for me, is to learn to draw well, to be master of my pencil or my crayon or my brush, this gained, I will make good things anywhere, and the Borinage is just as picturesque as old Venice, as Arabia, as Brittany, Normandy, Picardy or Brie.

If my work is bad it is my own fault. But certainly at Barbison one would have more chance than anywhere else of meeting with some more advanced artist, who would be as one of God's angels to me. I say this in all seriousness and without exaggeration.

So, if sooner or later you would find means or opportunity for it, think of me. In the meantime I stay quietly here in some little miner's hut, where I shall work as well as I can. You write to me about Méryon, what you say of him is quite true. I know his etchings a little. Would you like to see a curious thing? put one of his correct and masterly drawings side by side with some print by Violet-le-Duc, or some other architect. Then you will see Méryon in his full strength, because the other etching will serve to set off his work or to form a contrast. Well, what do you see then? This Méryon, even when he draws bricks, or granite, or iron bars, or a railing of a bridge, puts in his etchings something of the human soul, moved by I do not know what inward sorrow. I have seen drawings of Gothic architecture by Victor Hugo. Well, without having the force and masterly technique of Méryon, there was something of the same sentiment. What is that sentiment? It has some relation to that, which Albrecht Dürer expressed in his "Melancholia," which in our day, James Tissot, and M. Maris, have also (different as these two may be); of James

Tissot some profound critic has rightly said, "It is a soul in anguish." However it may be, there is something of the human soul in it, for that reason alone it is grand, immense, infinite, put Violet-le-Duc beside it, that is stone, and the other, Mêryon is Spirit. Mêryon is said to have had such a capacity for love, that now, like Sidney Carton of Dickens, he loves even the stones of certain places

In Millet, in Jules Breton, in Josef Israëls too one also finds even more in evidence, this precious pearl, the human soul, expressed in a nobler, worthier tone, more Evangelic if I may call it so.

But to come back to Mêryon, he has also a distant relationship with Jongkind I think, and perhaps with Seymour Haden, for at certain times these two artists have been very strong. Wait, perhaps you will see some day that I too am an artist, though I do not know beforehand what I can do, but I hope I shall be able to make some drawings, in which there is something human. But I must first draw the Bargues, and do other more or less difficult things. The path is narrow, the door is narrow, and there are few who find it.

Thanking you for your kindness, especially for the Buisson, I shake hands with you in thought,

Vincent.

Now I have taken your whole collection, but you will have another one I hope, and besides I have for your collection of woodcuts, some very good things in the two volumes of the "Musée Universel," which I intend for you.

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Dear Theo, Brussels October 15 1880.

You see it is from Brussels that I write to you. For I thought it better to change my domicile for the present. And that for more than one reason.

In the first place it was urgently necessary, because the little room where I was lodged and which you saw last year, was so narrow, and the light there was so bad, that it was very inconvenient to draw there. It is true that if I could have had another room in

that house I would have stayed, but the people of the house wanted that room for their cooking and washing, and even if I paid more I could not have had it. It is true, that nevertheless I drew there "Les Exercices au Fusain," and "Les Modèles d'après la bosse de Bargue," either in the little room or outside in the garden, but now that I am as far as the portraits after Holbein in the third part of the "Cours de Dessin," it became impossible. That is the reason why I moved, and in order to remedy things a little radically, this is my plan, which I have begun to carry out. I went to see Mr. Schmidt here at Brussels and told him about the affair, that is to say I asked him if he could not help me to enter into relation with some artist, so that I could continue my study in a good studio; for I feel that it is absolutely necessary to have good things to look at and also to see artists at work. For then I feel more what I lack and at the same time I learn how to do better.

It is already a long time since I have seen enough pictures or drawings, etc., and the very sight of some good things here in Brussels has given me new inspiration and has strengthened my desire to make things with my own hands.

If Mr. Schmidt would have the kindness to talk seriously about it to someone or other, I do not doubt that the thing could be satisfactorily arranged. He received me cordially, but still, if you yourself would put in a word or two in my behalf to recommend the thing to him, that would have more effect on him, than I could make myself, for it is quite natural that he perhaps looks at me with some suspicion, because formerly I was in the house Goupil & Co., then left it and now have gone back to things of art.

So if you write him a word by return mail, you would render me a great service, and it would spare me loss of time.

I immediately took up my work here, namely, the third part of Bargue, and I have a much better room here in a little hotel on the Bd. du Midi than the small cabinet I used to have.

Father wrote to me that for the present I may count on receiving through his intermediary fr. 60 a month. There are several young men who begin the study of drawing and are in the same position of not being rich either. But the thing that gives one strength in such circumstances is nor to be always alone, but to be in connection and relation with others, who are in the same position.

So you see, this is my great desire,—that by the intervention of Mr. Schmidt, some chance be given me to make the acquaintance of some of the young artists here.

Will you do what I ask you to that effect, that is write a little note to Mr. Schmidt? I have made another pen drawing after the Woodcutter of Millet (the woodcut that you sent me). I think pen drawing is a good preparation, if one should afterwards want to learn etching. The pen is also very useful in accentuating pencil drawings but one does not succeed in it at once.

As to the drawing after "Le Buisson," by Ruysdael, I will work at it especially with the pen, and prepare myself for it by trying it on other drawings. Among other things I have made one of the head of Dante, which looks somewhat like an etching. But it is not as easy as it seems. Mr. Schmidt in our interview spoke to me about entering the École des Beaux-Arts here, but I told him frankly that I thought it much better in my particular case to work with some artist. Especially because I have already finished two series of the Bargues, and am busy with the third one, which I could perhaps complete by the charcoal drawings d'Allongé. However I do not quite dismiss the idea of the École des Beaux-Arts, I might go there in the evening as long as I am here, if it is free or not too expensive.

But for the moment my aim must be to learn to make as soon as possible some drawings that are presentable and saleable, so that I can begin to earn something directly through my work. For that is the necessity that is forced upon me. If you write to me, please address your letters care of Mr. Schmidt for I do not know whether or not I shall stay longer in this hotel. I think you will approve of what I say, for to make progress it is necessary to continue with some energy.

Once having mastered my pencil or water-colouring, or etching, I can go back to the country of the miners or weavers, and work better from nature than I can do now, but first I must learn more of the technique.

Well, I finish my letter for this time, hoping you will approve of what I have said.

I think that a somewhat better lodging and perhaps better food than that of the Borinage will also help to set me right again. For I have undergone some misery in the Belgian "black country,"

and my health has not been very good lately, but if I can only succeed some day in learning to draw well what I want to express, I will forget all that, and I will only remember the good side of the things, which also exists, if one only looks for it. But still I must try to regain some strength, for I need all my energy.

With a handshake,

Vincent.

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Brussels November 1

Dear Theo, 72 Boulevard du Midi.

In answer to your letter I will tell you a few things.

In the first place that I have been to see Mr. Roelofs, the day after receiving your letter, and he has told me that in his opinion from now on I must draw principally from nature, that is from either cast or model, but not without the guidance of someone who knows it well. And he and others too have advised me so earnestly to go and work at the Academy, either here or at Antwerp or wherever I can, that I have felt obliged to try to get admission to the said Academy, though I do not think it so very agreeable. *Here in Brussels the teaching is free of charge* (In Amsterdam, for instance, I hear it costs fr. 100 a year) and one can work in a well-heated and well-lighted room, which is a good thing, especially in winter.

I get on very well with the Bargues, I am making progress.

Besides that I have been busy these days drawing something that gave me a lot of work, but still I am glad I have done it, namely, I drew with pen and ink a skeleton, of rather large size, on five pages of Ingres paper.

1 page: the head, bones and muscle.
1 page: the torso, bones.
1 page: the hand, front view, bones and muscle.
1 page: the hand, back view, bones and muscle.
1 page: the pelvis and legs, bones.

I got the idea of making these from a study book by John: Sketches on the anatomy for the use of artists. There are some

more reproductions in it, which seem to me very good and clear, of hand, foot, etc. etc. And what I am going to do now, is to finish the drawing of the muscles, that is those of the torso and the legs, which with the others will form the whole of the human body.

Then follows the back and side view of the body, so you see I am going ahead with a will, those things are not so easy and take time and a great deal of patience besides.

In order to be admitted to the Academy of drawing one must have the permission of the mayor and be registered. I am waiting for the answer to my request. I know quite well, no matter how economically or poorly one may live, life here in Brussels must be more expensive, but I cannot get on without some instruction and I think if I only work hard, which I do, possibly Uncle Vincent or Uncle Cor will do something, if not to help me, at least to help father.

I intend to get from the veterinary school, the pictures of the anatomy, for instance, of a horse, a cow, or sheep, and to draw them likewise, as I did the anatomy of the human body.

There are laws of proportion, of light and shadow, of perspective, which one *must know* in order to be able to draw well; without that knowledge it always remains a fruitless struggle, and one never brings forth anything. Therefore I think I was right in acting as I did, and I will try to store this winter some capital of anatomy; I may not put it off longer and in the end it would prove more expensive, for it would be loss of time.

I believe this will also be your point of view.

It is a hard and difficult struggle to learn to draw well.

If I might find here some permanent work so much the better, but I dare not count on it, for I have still many things to learn.

I have also been to see Mr. Van Rappard[1] who now lives at Rue Traversière 6a and had a talk with him. He is a fine looking man; of his work I saw only a few small landscape pen drawings. But judging from his way of living, he must be wealthy, and I do not know whether he is the person with whom I might live and work, because of financial reasons. But I certainly shall go and visit

[1] The Dutch painter Anton van Rappard (1858–1892) while studying in Paris had made the acquaintance of Theo. The visit Vincent paid him through Theo's introduction was the beginning of a friendship that lasted five years, and then ended through a misunderstanding.

him again. The impression he made upon me was that he takes things seriously.

Boy, if I had stayed a month longer in Cuesmes I would have been sick with misery. You must not imagine that I live richly here, for my chief food is dry bread and some potatoes or chestnuts, which people sell here on the corners of the streets, but by having a somewhat better room and taking now and then a somewhat better meal in a restaurant, whenever I can afford it, I shall get on very well. But for almost two years I have had a hard time in the Borinage, that was no pleasure trip I assure you. The expenses here will be somewhat more than fr. 60, which cannot be helped. Drawing materials, studies to copy, for instance for anatomy, all that costs money, and yet they are strictly necessary things, and only in this way I will obtain a fair return, otherwise I could never succeed. The other day I read with great pleasure an extract from the work of Lavater and Gall: "Physiognomy and Phrenology," namely, how character is expressed in the features and in the shape of the skull. I have drawn "Les Bêcheurs" by Millet, from a Braun's photograph which I found at Schmidt's, and which he lent me, together with that of "The Angelus." I sent both these drawings to father that he might see I am working.

Write soon again, address 72 *Bd. du Midi*, I am here in a small hotel for fr. 50 a month, my bread included, also a cup of coffee morning, afternoon and evening. That is not very cheap, but it is expensive everywhere. Those Holbeins in "The Models from the Artists" are splendid. Now that I draw them I feel it even much stronger than before. But I assure you they are not easy.

When I went to see Mr. Schmidt I had not the slightest idea that he was involved in a money question which regarded the family van Gogh, for which reason he, Mr. Schmidt, was going to be sued, I only heard it from your letter. So that was rather bad luck, though I must say Mr. Schmidt received me rather cordially. But since I know it, and things being as they are, it will perhaps be wise not to go there often, though I do not see the necessity of intentionally avoiding him. I would have written sooner, but was too busy with my skeleton. I believe the longer you think it over, the more you will see the urgent necessity of more artistic surroundings for me, for how can one learn to draw if no one shows

one how, and with all the best intentions in the world one cannot succeed without coming in contact with artists, who are more advanced.

Good intentions alone are not sufficient without some opportunity for development. As to the mediocre artists, to which you think I should not want to belong, what shall I say about it? That quite depends on what you call mediocre.

I shall do what I can, but mediocre in its simple signification I do not despise at all. And one certainly does not rise above that mark by despising what is mediocre. In my opinion one must begin at least by having some respect for the mediocre, and know that it already means something, and that it is only reached with great difficulty. Adieu, for the present, I shake hands with you in thought. Write soon if possible,

Vincent.

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Mon très cher, (Brussels January 1881.)

As I have not heard from you for so long, that means not for several months, nor even had the slightest answer to my last letter, perhaps it will not be out of place to ask you for some sign of life.

I must say it seems rather strange and rather unaccountable that you have not written me since the one letter I received on my arrival here.

Not to write is good, but to write in time is not bad either, even in some cases it is much better.

In thinking of you I unconsciously said to myself:

Why does he not write? If he is afraid to compromise himself in the eyes of Messrs. Goupil & Co. by keeping in touch with me, is his position towards those gentlemen so shaky and unsteady that he is obliged to be so careful? Or is it that he is afraid I will ask him for money? But if this was the reason for your silence you might have at least waited until I tried to squeeze something from you, as the saying is.

However I will not prolong this letter unnecessarily by enumerating a lot of things which now and then pass through my head, when I think of the reasons you may have had for not writing.

I have been drawing all winter until now, and I have also read a great deal, for indirectly that is very necessary for me. On the whole, I can say I have made progress, but I ought to be able to get along more quickly. The principal motive for writing you now is to ask you if you know any reason why I should not go and see Mr. Tersteeg and Mauve. I think it would be to my advantage to go to the Hague for some time. But if I knew for certain that Mr. Tersteeg would rather I did not come there, that might make me change my mind. What do you think about it? I have seen little of van Rappard, because I seemed to notice that he did not like to be disturbed. As long as I am not more advanced I must avoid young artists, who do not always think of what they do or say.

And yet I long very much to find one, who being more advanced than I am, could help me to make progress.

Well, tell me if you see any insurmountable obstacle to my going to the Hague for some time, and if you perhaps know another way, in case I am prevented from going there.

I shake hands, awaiting a somewhat quicker reply,

Vincent

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72 Boulevard du Midi.

My dear Theo, Brussels Jan. '81.

You will quite forgive me when you know that I wrote my last letter in a moment of spleen. My drawings went all wrong, and not knowing what to do I began to write. I certainly ought to have waited for a better moment, and this will show you that I myself undoubtedly belong to that class of people of which I spoke in my last letter, namely, that class of people who do not always reflect on what they say or do. This being so let us drop it.

I can tell you one thing; these last days there has been a change for the better. I have finished at least a dozen drawings or rather sketches in pencil, and pen and ink, which seem to me to be somewhat better. They vaguely resemble certain drawings by Lançon, or certain English woodcuts, but they are more clumsy and awkward as yet. They represent a porter, a miner, a snow shoveller, a walk in the snow, old women, type of an old man ("Ferragus" from Balzac's "History of the Thirteen"), etc. I send you

two small ones: "En Route" and "Devant les Tisons." I see perfectly well that they are not good, but it begins to look like something.

I have a model almost every day, an old porter, or some working man, or some boy, that poses for me. Next Sunday I shall perhaps have one or two soldiers that will sit for me. And because I am now no longer in a bad humour, I have quite a different and better opinion of you, and of the whole world in general. I have also made again a drawing of a landscape; a heath, a thing I had not done for a long time.

I love landscape very much, but ten times more I love those studies from life, sometimes of startling realism, which have been drawn so masterly by Gavarni, Henri Monnier, Daumier, de Lemud, Henri Pille, Th. Schuler, Ed. Morin, G. Doré (for ex.: in his "London"), A. Lançon, de Groux, Felicien Rops, etc. etc.

Now without in the least pretending to compare myself to those artists, still, by going on drawing those types of working people, etc., I hope to arrive at the point of being able to do illustration work for papers and books. Especially when I shall be able to take more models, also women models, I will make more progress, I feel it, and know it.

And I shall also probably learn to make portraits. But the condition is to work hard; "not a day without a line," as Gavarni said.

So it is understood that for the present I stay here, till you perhaps find something better for me. Only write to me now and then. I am for the moment busy drawing for the third time all the "Exercices au Fusain" of Bargue. You told me of a change in the staff of employees in the house Goupil & Co., and also of another change in your own position.

I congratulate you, and as to those gentlemen Coupil & Co., I

am inclined to believe that they are to be congratulated too, on having got rid of some of the staff. I have always thought that those gentlemen themselves were animated by a superior and nobler spirit than that of those that now have been sent away.

Perhaps the position the latter have occupied so long in the House, their influence and their domination, which Messrs. Goupil & Co. put up with, were repugnant to some of the other employees, which the company would perhaps have done better to retain, but who were so driven to extremity, that they took their discharge.

As you vaguely spoke to me sometime ago about coming to Paris, I must tell you that I wish no better than to go there some day soon, if I were sure of finding there some work, that would give me at least a salary of fr. 100 a month; I must also tell you that as I have begun to draw, I do not intend to drop it, so I will try chiefly to get on in that line. Not only does the drawing of figures and scenes from life demand a knowledge of the handicraft of drawing, but it demands also profound studies of literature, physiognomy, etc., which are difficult to acquire.

Enough for to-day, write to me when you have a moment to spare, and believe me with a handshake, Yours,

Vincent.

72 Bd. du Midi.

Some day I hope to go and see Mr. Horta.

Dear Father and Mother, Brussels February 16 1881.

I received your letter that made me very happy, as I was already looking for it, especially because of father's illness. I was glad to hear that there is some improvement.

I am getting on pretty well with my work, though it is still far from perfect, and must become much better still.

In the studio of that painter I found a very good reproduction of a skeleton. As those things are rather difficult to get, I asked him if he would lend it to me for a few days to copy. At first he made some objections, probably because he thought I could not do it, or that it would take me too long, but I insisted on having it, and he consented. That happened last Sunday afternoon, and as soon as I came home I began it, and Monday night it was finished, and to his surprise on Tuesday morning I brought it back to him, and he thought my drawing good, and indeed it is not so bad after all. I will profit more from his instruction if he only has time to spare. On some points, especially in perspective, he is very well informed, and I at least can learn a great deal from him.

Now, I must tell you another thing that I have done. As I told you, about a month ago, I bought a pair of trousers and a coat, second hand. That turned out so well that I bought another coat and pair of trousers from the same man. It is true that the first suit would have been quite sufficient, but it is much better to have two suits, because they last longer when one can wear them alternately. Enclosed I send you a sample of the material. And I had also to replenish my underwear with three pair of drawers, and paid for them fr. 2.75 a piece, besides I bought a pair of shoes for fr. 4. It really was not superfluous that I bought these things.

But altogether they have made a big hole in this month's money, and I shall have to stint myself in consequence, especially because I paid fr. 5 to that painter in advance for the lessons.

Do not worry about these expenses however, and do not accuse me of extravagance, for really the contrary is rather my fault, and if I could spend more I would get on quicker, and make more progress.

If you can send me some extra this month without depriving yourselves I hope you will do so. But if you cannot there is no

immediate hurry for I told my landlord that I should be rather hard up this month, and he agreed that I could pay when it is convenient, because he now knows me well enough not to demand my paying in advance, at least not a full month.

I bought that suit for still another reason, than for wearing it myself as long as possible; when I can wear it no longer it will serve me in another way. For you must know that I must have, by and by, a small collection of workmen's clothes to dress the models for my drawings. For instance, a Brabant blue smock, the grey linen suit that the miners wear, and their leather hat, then a straw hat and wooden shoes, a fisherman's outfit of yellow oil-skin and a southwester. And certainly also that suit of black or brown corduroy, that is very picturesque and characteristic,— and then a red flannel shirt or undervest. And also a few women's dresses, for instance that of de Kempen and from the neighbourhood of Antwerp with the Brabant bonnet, and for instance that of Blankenberg, or Scheveningen or Katwyk.

I certainly do not intend to buy all this at once, but to collect it, by and by, piece by piece, when I have a chance. And as one can buy those clothes second hand it is not at all difficult to get them. I shall only be able to manage this well when I have some kind of studio of my own.

That is the only true way to succeed: to draw after the model with the necessary costumes.

Only when I study drawing thus seriously and thoroughly, always trying to portray truly what I see, shall I arrive, and then notwithstanding the inevitable expenses I shall make a living by it. For a good draughtsman can certainly find work nowadays, and such persons are in great demand, and there are positions that are very well paid. So the question is to try and become as skilled as possible. In Paris there is many a draughtsman who earns from 10 to 15 francs a day, and in London and elsewhere the same and even more, but one does not reach this at once, and I am not so far advanced as yet, but may become so, if I have some good luck, and can renew the relations with persons like Mr. Tersteeg and Theo and others, especially with good painters and draughtsmen. But I must work and study very hard, that is the condition.

You will not be surprised when I tell you that I am longing to hear what Theo's proposition might be, or to hear something from

Mr. Tersteeg. For in some way or other I must know before the month of March, what I can expect and how and where I shall be able to work during the spring and summer.

And if I might succeed in earning something, that would not be unpleasant at all though the principal thing is that I make progress and my drawing becomes stronger, then everything will come right sooner or later, after all. Models are expensive, at least relatively expensive, and if I had money enough to have them often I should be able to work much better. But then a studio becomes indispensable.

And people like Mr. Tersteeg, Theo, and others know that quite well. Well, I must wait until they write me what they think, and meanwhile I must do what I can.

I made another drawing of miners in the snow, which is somewhat better than that of last winter, there is more character and effect in it. I am also collecting woodcuts again, in the manner of those albums that Theo and Willemien had one time. For if I can more or less complete the collection they will be of use to me, as it is quite possible that I will work from woodcuts some time.

I must tell you that those clothes I bought are of good cut, and look better on me than any others that I can remember. I tell you this because you might think they were something unusual or showy; especially in the studios this material is worn very often.

And now I finish, with greetings to all, and my best wishes for A.'s birthday, and believe me

Your loving

Vincent.

The painter who gives me lessons now is making a very good picture of a fisherman of Blankenberg.

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2/4 '81.

Dear Theo, 72 Bd. du Midi, Brussels.

In answer to your two good letters, and as a result of father's visit for which I had been longing for some time, I have a few things to tell you.

In the first place this. From father I hear that without my knowing it you have sent me money for a long time, in this way helping me effectually to get on. Receive my hearty thanks for it. I firmly believe that you will not regret it; in this way I learn a handicraft, and though it certainly will not make me rich, I will at any rate earn my fr. 100 a month, which is the least one needs to live on, as soon as I become a better draughtsman and get some regular work.

What you told us about the painter Heyerdahl[1] has greatly interested van Rappard, as well as me.

As the former undoubtedly will write you about it himself, I speak about this question only in so far as it regards myself personally, more or less.

I find much truth in your remarks about the Dutch artists, that it is very doubtful if one could get from them some clear indication on the difficulties of perspective, etc., with which I am struggling. At least I quite agree with you that someone like Heyerdahl would be far preferable (as he seems to be such a many-sided man) to many others who do not possess the talent of explaining their method, and to give one the necessary guidance and teaching. You speak about Heyerdahl, as of somebody who takes great pains to seek proportions for drawing; that is just what I need. Many a good painter has not the slightest or hardly any idea what proportions for drawing are, or beautiful lines, or characteristic composition, and thought and poetry. Yet these are important questions, which Feyen Perrin, and Ulysse Butin, and Alphonse Legros, not to mention Breton and Millet and Israëls greatly take to heart, and never lose from sight.

Many a Dutch painter would not understand anything, absolutely nothing, of the beautiful work of Boughton, Millais, Pinwell, Dumauriez, Herkomer, and Walker, to name only a few artists who as draughtsmen are real masters, not to mention their qualities in other directions.

I say many of them look with contempt at such work, like many do at the work of de Groux, even among the painters here in Belgium, who ought to know better. From de Groux I saw this week, things which I did not know, namely, a picture "Departure of the Conscript," and a drawing in the length "The Drunkard,"

[1] Norwegian painter, temporarily in Paris at the studio of Bonnat.

two compositions which resemble Boughton so much, that I was struck with the resemblance, as of two brothers who had never met and who yet were of one mind.

So you see I quite agree with your opinion on Heyerdahl, and I shall be very happy if you could later on bring me in relation with that man, further I will not insist on carrying through my going to Holland, at least if I have the prospect of going to Paris later, and may more or less count on that.

But in the meantime what must I do, what do you think would be best? For a few weeks I can continue to work with Rappard, but then he will probably leave here. My bedroom is too small, and the light is not good, and the people would object to my partly shutting off the light from the window, I may not even put up my etchings or my drawings, on the wall. So when Rappard leaves here in May I must move, and should like to work some time in the country, Heyst, Calmphout, Etten, Scheveningen, Katwyk, or any place, even nearer here, Schaerbeek, Haeren, Groenendael. But preferably a place where there is a chance of coming in contact with other painters, and if possible to live and work together, because it is cheaper and better.

The expenses of living, wherever it may be, are always at least fr. 100 a month; if one has less it means want, either physically or of the necessary material and tools.

This winter I have spent let us say fr. 100 a month, though in reality it has scarcely been as much. And from that I spent a great deal on drawing materials and also got myself some clothes. I bought, namely, two workmen's suits of rough black velvet, of that material known as veloutine. That looks well, and one can appear everywhere in it; besides they will be of use to me afterwards, because I shall want a great many workman's clothes, as I already do now for my models, which of course I need like everybody else. By and by, I must make a collection to that effect, of all kinds of dresses, second-hand if necessary, men's as well as women's; but of course I need not do all this at once, though I have started it, and go on with it.

It is true what you say, that financial questions have either advanced or handicapped many people in the world. It is so, and the word of Bernard Palissy remains true: "Poverty prevents growth," but when I think it over I must say: would it be right,

if in a family like ours, where two Messrs. van Gogh are very rich, and both in the line of art, Uncle Cor and our Uncle of Prinsenhage, and where of the younger generation, you and I have chosen the same line, though in different spheres, would it be well, I say, if this being so, I should not be able to count in some way on fr. 100 a month for the time that must necessarily elapse before I can get regular work as a draughtsman? Now three years ago I quarrelled with C.M. about quite a different question, but is that a reason why C.M. should remain my enemy for ever? I would much rather think that he had never been my enemy and consider it a misunderstanding, of which I gladly take all the fault on myself, rather than argue about how much of it really is my fault, for I have no time left for such things.

Uncle Cor so often helps other draughtsmen, would it be so unnatural now if some day, when I needed it, he would show me his goodwill? I do not say this however to get some financial help from him. In quite another way than by giving money, he would be able to help me, for instance, if it were possible to bring me in contact with persons from whom I could learn many things, or for instance to help me to get regular work for some magazine. In this way I talked it over with father; I noticed that people talked about the strange and unaccountable fact, that I was so hard up, and yet belonged to such and such a family. I replied to them, that I thought it was only a passing affair, and would come right after some time. Still I thought it better to talk it over with father and you, and I wrote something about it to Mr. Tersteeg, but he seems to have misunderstood my intention, as he received the impression that I intended to live on the bounty of my uncles, and this being his opinion, he wrote me a very discouraging letter, and said I had no right to such a thing.

. . . . . .

I wrote back to him, that I was not at all astonished that he had misconstrued my letter so, as you yourself had spoken one time of "living on my rents." And as I now seem to understand from the tone of your letter, that you no longer see my difficult position in that miserable light and realize this from your strong assistance, so I hope that Mr. Tersteeg will also change his opinion by and by. The more so because he was the first to help me with those Bargues, for which I shall always be grateful to him.

You write me about a manikin. I am not in a special hurry for it, but it would be of great service to me in composing and finding the right positions, you understand that. But I would rather wait some time and have a better one, than to take one now that is too defective.

But please look out for all possible prints or books on proportion, and gather as much information about them as you can, that is of the greatest value to me, without that one cannot make quickly a composition of figures. Furthermore, I want something about the anatomy of the horse, and sheep, and cow, but not with regard to veterinary science, but rather in relation to the drawing of those animals.

If I ask you for these things it is because you may occasionally find such prints cheaply, as I too have found some. If you ever have the opportunity to ask for instance Bargue or Violet-le-Duc about those pages on proportion, that would perhaps be the best source of information.

Of course, I should be delighted to live with you later, but we are not so far as yet. If C. M. would help me to find some place for the time being, indeed I would not refuse it.

Even from relatively bad artists one can indirectly learn much, as for instance Mauve learned much from Verschuur about the perspective of a stable and a wagon, and the anatomy of a horse, and yet how far above Verschuur is Mauve.

If you can recommend a picture of Madiol at the Salon, do so, for there is much that is beautiful in it, and the man is hard up, and has a great many little children. He is now painting a forge, it is very good; and not long ago he painted a little old woman, which is superb in drawing and especially in colouring. But his work has much variety. His charcoal drawings are often excellent.

This letter is rather long but I cannot make it shorter. When I speak about the possibility that at least outwardly C. M. and others should change their opinion about me, but I had much rather it were so in truth; it is because for instance somebody like Roelofs, does not know what to think of such a crooked position, either there must be something wrong with me or with the others, but he sees: there is something wrong somewhere anyhow. So he is rather too prudent, and will have nothing to do with me just at the moment that I most need advice or help.

And such experiences are not pleasant ; the question remains whether I do not make progress in working on with patient energy? I think I do. Where there is a will, there is a way. And should I be to blame afterwards, if I took my revenge then? But an artist does not draw for the sake of revenge, but for the love of drawing, and that urges you on more than any other motive. So perhaps some things that are now amiss will come right after all. This winter I have collected many woodcuts. Your Millets have increased in number, and you will see that I did not keep your capital of woodcuts, etc., without their bringing interest. I have now 24 woodcuts, from and after Millet, counting " De Travaux des Champs " with them. But the principal thing for me is to draw, and everything must contribute to that end.

The cheapest way would perhaps be for me to spend this summer at Etten, I can find there subjects enough. If you think this right you may write to father about it. I am willing to give in about dress or anything else to suit them, and perhaps would meet C. M. there some day this summer. There are no real objections to this, as far as I know. They will always, either in or outside the family, judge me or talk about me from different points of view, and you will always hear the most different opinions about me.

And I blame no one for it, because relatively few people know why an artist acts in this way or that. But in general, he who to find picturesque spots or figures, searches all manner of places, corners, and holes, which another rather passes by, is accused of many bad intentions and villainies which have never entered his head.

A peasant who sees me draw an old tree-trunk, and sees me sitting there for an hour, thinks that I have gone mad, and of course laughs at me. A young lady who turns up her nose at a labourer in his patched, dirty and filthy clothes, of course cannot understand why anyone visits the Borinage or Heyst, and descends the shaft of a coal mine, and she also comes to the conclusion that I am mad.

But of course I do not care at all what they think if only you and Mr. Tersteeg, and C. M. and father, and others with whom I come in contact, know better, and instead of making remarks about it say: your work demands that, and we understand why it is so.

So I repeat, under the circumstances there is after all no urgent reason why I should not go, for instance to Etten or to the Hague,

if that were preferable, even though it may be criticised by some fops and silly girls. As father said to me when he was here: "just write to Theo, and arrange with him what is best, and what will be the cheapest way." I hope you will soon write me your opinion about it.

Heyst or Calmpthout are very picturesque. In Etten I could also find subjects enough, if necessary even here, though then I would move to Schaerbeek.

Scheveningen or Katwyk would perhaps be possible if C. M. changed his opinion of me, and then I could profit directly or indirectly from the Dutch artists. As to the expenses I suppose they would amount at least to fr. 100 a month, to do it with less is impossible: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn."

So I wait for your reply about these things, and in the meantime I work with Rappard.

Rappard has painted some good studies, among others a few after the models at the Academy, which are well done. A little more fire and passion would do him no harm, a little more self-confidence and more courage. Somebody once said to me, "Nous devons faire des efforts de perdus, de désespérés." That is what he does not do as yet.

His pen-and-ink drawings of landscape are very witty and charming, but also in those, a little more passion please. And now I take leave, with a handshake, and am always

Yours,

Vincent.

143

Dear Theo, 12/4 '81.

As I heard from father that there is a chance of your being in Etten next Sunday, and that it would be well for me to be there also, I start thither to-day.

So I hope to meet you soon, and am longing for it very much, also because I have sketched two drawings at Rappard's, "The Lamp Bearers," and "The Bearers of the Burden," and I should like to consult with you how to go on with them. To finish them I must have somehow, the necessary models, and then I trust the

result will be good, that is I shall have a few compositions to show to Smeeton Tilly, or to the editors of the "Illustration" or the like.

So I leave to-day and tell you this, so that you will not look out for me at Brussels. I should like to make a few sketches of the heath at Etten, that is the reason I start a few days earlier.

So I hope to meet you soon, and now shake hands with you in thought.

Yours truly,

Vincent.

ETTEN

April 1881–December 1881

While Vincent spends the summer of 1881 in Etten with his parents, and is working hard there, a cousin from Amsterdam comes to stay with them,—a young widow with her little boy. She is beautiful and attractive, tender-hearted and charming, and is grateful for the kindness Vincent shows her little boy. So a kind of friendship arises which on Vincent's side becomes a passionate love, without its being in the least returned. The young widow is too much engrossed in her recent loss to think of a new love.

This disappointment, which Vincent never got over, brings a great change in his life. Etten becomes unbearable to him, and at the end of the year, he starts for the Hague.

THE PARSONAGE AT ETTEN

144

Dear Theo, (Etten May 1 1881).

My best wishes for your birthday. I often think of your visit, I am glad we saw each other again, and hope you will come back this summer. I have been here now a few days and it is splendid outdoors, but the weather does not as yet allow drawing in the open

air every day. Meanwhile I began the Millets. "Le Semeur" is finished and I sketched "Les Heures de la Journée." And now I must still make "Les Travaux des Champs."

As you know there was an exhibition of water-colours in Brussels, it was rather interesting. Among the Dutch there were four or five Mauve's: "Woodcutters," J. Maris: "Dunes," like a picture by Ruysdael or van der Velde, then J. H. Weissenbruch, 5 superb large drawings. Roelof's, also 5 large ones, then Gabriel, and van der Sande Backhuyzen, and Valkenburg, and van Trigt, and P. Stortenbeker, and Vogel, etc.

Then there was a Mesdag that kept one from looking at any other drawing, at least it was so with me. The Beach at twilight, stormy weather, a sky with grey clouds, and the ruddy glow of the setting sun.

In the foreground a fisherman on horseback, a slim, strange, dark silhouette standing out against the white foaming waves. That figure is speaking with people on board a fishing-smack that is riding on the waves, in the middle distance. On deck some people are busy with a lantern, and they are talking to the man on horseback, apparently about the anchor which he must come and take ashore. It was a large important drawing, broadly done and so strong, that as I told you, nothing else could indeed be compared to it.

There were two drawings by ter Meulen that struck me too: "Sheep in the Dunes," and "Sheep in the Snow"; he is making good progress. If I remember well I saw that man at Bakhuyzen's studio, drudging and plodding along, and yet he has arrived now, at least these two drawings were excellent. Then there were drawings by Meunier: "Varlet dans une Grange," refined in colour and tone, and also in conception, reminding one of Millet for instance as regards simplicity and faithfulness to nature; by him also "A Stoker" and "A Factory Hand." There were several drawings by Rochussen too, and many others; but of the Belgians it was only Meunier that appealed to me. In three weeks Rappard will go to Holland, and probably will work this summer in the country, and then perhaps next winter go to Paris; but as it looks now he is not going to stay there.

I think he received a shower of cold water there at the time, but that is no reason why he should not be more fortunate next time.

It certainly is true that he has made great progress since then. I am so glad it is arranged that I shall be able to work here quietly for a while. I hope to make as many studies here as I can, for that is the seed which must afterwards produce the drawings.

Write to me now and then, and keep me informed if possible about the things that strike you, and if you might hear of a vacant place for a draughtsman, think of me then.

And now it is mail time. I will let you know what I am doing, and now and then I hope you will give me your advice as to what subjects to choose for drawing, sometimes it will be of use to me, sometimes perhaps not, but tell me what you think. I will do the same to you, and then from both sides we must try to sift the husk from the grain. Adieu, a handshake in thought,

Vincent.

145

Dear Theo,

I enclose a little note because the others are writing to you, for I thought you would like to hear what I am actually doing.

When it does not rain I go out every day in the fields, generally to the heath. I make my studies on rather a large scale, as you have seen from a few at the time of your visit, so I have made among others, a cottage on the heath, and also that barn with a thatched roof, on the road to Roozendaal, which they call here the Protestant barn.

You will perhaps remember what I mean.

Then the mill right opposite to it, in the meadow, and the elm trees in the churchyard.

And another of woodcutters, busy on a wide patch of ground, where a large pine wood has been cut down. Besides I try to draw the implements, as a wagon, plough, harrow, wheelbarrow, etc. etc.

That with the woodcutters turned out best of all, and I think you would like it.

Perhaps Rappard will come here some time this summer, I had a letter from him.

A handshake in thought, and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

Dear Theo,

It is time for you to hear from me again.

You must know that Rappard has been here for about twelve days, and now he is gone. Of course he sends you his best regards. We have taken many long walks together, have been, for instance, several times to the heath, near Seppe, to the so-called Passievaart, a big swamp. Rappard painted there a large study (1 metre by 50), it was not bad. Besides that he has made about 10 small sepias, also in the Liesbosch.

While he was painting I made a drawing in pen and ink, from another spot in the swamp, where all the water-lilies grow (near the road to Roozendaal). We have also been together to Prinsenhage, but Uncle was ill in bed. I think Rappard makes progress in his work; from what he told me he has got a nicely furnished studio at home. Now this week he goes to Loosdrecht where he intends to stay a month. He too works *regularly* and hard.

I bought Cassagne: "Traité d'Aquarelle," and am studying it; even if I should not make any water-colours I shall probably find many things in it, for instance, about sepia and ink. For until now I have exclusively drawn in pencil accented by the pen, sometimes a reed pen, which has a broader stroke.

What I have been drawing lately demanded that way of working, because the subjects required much *drawing*, drawing in perspective too, for instance, a few workshops in the village here, a forge, a carpenter's shop and sabot maker's.

Willemien has left now and I am sorry, she poses very well, I made a drawing of her and of another girl who stayed here. I put a sewing-machine in that drawing. Nowadays, there are no more spinning-wheels, and that is a great pity for painters and draughtsmen, but something has come in its place that is no less picturesque, and that is the sewing-machine.

What about your coming here this summer, is there any chance of its really happening? I hope so.

Rappard seems to have a boat of his own there at Loosdrecht; that must be fine.

From Loosdrecht he intends to go to Gelderland.

He would like very much to meet you, and I promised him that

if you came, and I knew it beforehand, I should let him know, because he would then try to arrange to meet you.

I do not know whether he intends to go back to Paris; he did not speak of it at all. Neither do I know if this is a sign he does not think about it, or that, on the contrary, *il couve son projet.*

When I think that he is only twenty-three years old, and more things like that, I would not be astonished if the latter were the case. I hope you will write to me if you can spare a moment. If you could by chance send me the catalogue of the Salon, I should be greatly obliged to you.

Rappard told me he was going to buy all the books by Cassagne. He has trouble with his perspective, and I know no better remedy for this ailment, at least if I may be quite cured of it I shall have to thank those books for it, that is to say, I put into practice the theory they contained. However, practice is a thing one cannot buy at the same time with the books, if that were so there would be a larger sale of them I suppose.

And now adieu, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

147

[Undated.]

Dear Theo,

In your last letter you wrote there is a good chance of your coming pretty soon to Holland. I am very glad, because I am longing to see you. Now that I know you are coming, I think it still more unnecessary to send you a few things, which I should perhaps have done if you were not coming, that you might see my drawings do not get any worse, though they are far from what they ought to be. Well, you will see for yourself what is in them when you come. In my last letter I wrote about the catalogue of the Salon, I did this to remind you of it, in case you might be able to get one.

Of course if need be I can do very well without it, it is not a necessity of life.

But there is another thing that is a necessity, and when you come, and if it is not too difficult for you to carry, bring some with you then. I mean, *white Ingres paper.* I brought some of it from Brussels, and worked with pleasure on it, as it is very well suited for

pen drawing, especially for a reed pen. Now, I have been without it for quite a time, and here I can get no other than smooth paper without grain (unless I take Whatman or Harding, but that is too expensive for sketches, the Ingres paper costs 10 centimes a sheet, I think).

Well, try your best to put in your bag as large a package of it as you can, and you will give me more pleasure than with anything else. I have made another drawing in the Liesbosch, and now it has become quite hot, too hot to sit on the heath by day, so I work at home now, and am copying the drawings by Holbein from the Bargues. Remembering what you told me once, I have tried to draw a few portraits after photographs, and I think this is a good practice.

As I asked you before, write whenever you can and receive a handshake in thought,

Vincent.

148

Dear Theo, [Undated.]

It was very pleasant to have you here again, and to have long talks together about everything. I always regret that we cannot be much more together. Not that I think talking in itself so valuable, but I mean that I wish we knew each other much better and more intimately than we do now. That thought occurred to me especially on riding back from Roozendaal, after having seen you to the station, also in regard to some things we said that last moment at the station.

I am glad to hear from your letter of to-day that you hope to come back before very long. Of course I feel quite better now. The day after you left I stayed in bed, however, and had a long talk with Dr. van Gent, a clever and practical man; not because I thought this insignificant malaise worth while, but rather because in general, either well or unwell, I like to talk with a doctor now and then, in order to know that everything is right. If one hears, occasionally, a sound and true word about health, one gets by and by much clearer ideas about it; and if one knows what things to avoid, and what things to do, one is not shaken like a reed by every

wind, and does not believe all the nonsense one hears so often about health and ill-health.

For the rest I am drawing the "Exercices au Fusain," on that Ingres paper you brought with you, it is difficult enough. It is much more animating to draw from nature than to copy such a page from the Bargues, but still I set myself the task of drawing them once more, and now for the last time.

It would not be right, if in drawing from nature I took up too many details and overlooked the great things. And that was too much the case in my last drawings I thought. And therefore I want to study again the method of Bargue (who gives only great lines and forms, and simple delicate outlines). And for the moment I leave off drawing outdoors. When I shall go back to it shortly, I shall have a better view of things than before.

I do not know if you ever read English books, if so I can strongly recommend you to read "Shirley," by Currer Bell, author of another book called "Jane Eyre." It is as beautiful as are the pictures by Millet or Boughton or Herkomer. I found it at Prinsenhage and finished it in three days, though it is quite a voluminous book.

I wish all people had what I begin to acquire gradually, the power to read a book, without difficulty, in a short time, and to keep a strong impression of it. It is with the reading of books the same as with looking at pictures, one must without doubt, without hesitation, with assurance, admire what is beautiful.

I am busy arranging all my books again, I have read too much, not to work on systematically, in order to get at least an idea of modern literature. Sometimes I am so sorry that I do not know more about history, especially modern history. Well, being sorry and letting things go, do not help us on; the only thing one has to do is to push forward.

I was very glad to detect now and then in your talk some very good philosophy. Who knows what a great thinker you will become in time. If you think "Illusions perdues," by Balzac too long (two volumes) then try "Le Père Goriot," one volume only; when you once have tried Balzac, you will prefer him to many others. Remember the surname of Balzac: "vétérinaire des maladies incurables."

About the time I shall have finished the Bargues it will be

autumn; that is a delightful time for drawing. I wish that Rappard would come back here then.

I think I shall find a good model here in Piet Kaufman, the gardener, but I think it will be better to let him pose with a spade or plough or something like that, not here at home, but either in the yard or in his own home or in the field. But what a tough job it is to make people understand how to pose.—Folks are desperately obstinate in this respect, and it is hard to make them yield on this point; they only want to pose in Sunday clothes, with impossible folds in which neither knees, nor elbows, nor omoplates, nor any other part of the body have left their characteristic dents or bumps. Indeed that is one of the *petites misères de la vie d'un dessinateur*.

Well, adieu, write when you can and receive a handshake in thought from

Yours,

Vincent.

149

Dear Theo, [Undated.]

I just came back from a trip to the Hague. I am at home alone to-night, father and mother being still in Prinsenhage. So it is a good opportunity to tell you about everything.

I left here Tuesday and now it is Friday night.

At the Hague I went to see Mr. Tersteeg, Mauve and de Bock. Mr. Tersteeg was very kind, and said he thought I had made progress. As I had again copied the whole series "Exercices au Fusain," 1–60, I had brought them with me, and it was especially in reference to these that he made the remark, for he at least attaches some value to my making them, also to my copying, now and then, a figure by Millet, Boughton, or others, which most people do not approve of at all.

So then I got some satisfaction from that work too.

With Mauve I spent an afternoon and part of an evening, and saw many beautiful things in his studio. My own drawings seemed to interest Mauve more. He has given me a great many hints, which I was glad to get, and I have arranged with him to

come back to see him, in a relatively short time, when I shall have new studies.

He has shown me a whole lot of his studies and explained them to me,—not sketches for drawings or pictures, but real studies, seemingly of little importance. He thinks I should now start painting.

I enjoyed meeting de Bock; I was at his studio. He is painting a large picture of the dunes that has much that is fine in it. But the fellow must practise figure drawing, and then he will produce still better things I think. It seems to me he has a real artist's temperament, and we have not heard the last of him. He is very fond of Millet and Corot, but did not these two work hard on figures, yes or no? The figures of Corot are not so well known as his landscapes, but it cannot be denied that he has made them. Besides, Corot has drawn and modelled every tree-trunk with the same devotion and love as if it were a figure. And a tree by Corot is something quite different from one by de Bock. One of the best things I saw from de Bock was a copy from Corot. It would not be easily taken for a real one, but it was very seriously done, more seriously than many a false Corot, which has a less noticeable difference from a true one.

Then I saw with him the "Panorama" by Mesdag, it is a work that deserves all respect. It reminded me of a saying, I think by Burger or Thoré on the anatomy lesson by Rembrandt: the only fault of this picture is that it has no fault. The three drawings by Mesdag at the exhibition had perhaps more faults, but aroused immediate sympathy, at least it was so with me.

Speaking about the exhibition, there was a splendid drawing by Israëls, "Sewing-Class at Katwyk"; Mauve: "A Plough," splendid, "Sheep in the Dunes," and then a single figure, a labourer resting in the field at evening. Artz had three drawings there if I remember well, a scene in an almshouse, old men and women who are eating porridge, very important, very well and seriously done; also two studies of heads, full of character, a man and woman from Scheveningen. Weissenbruch had among others a drawing of water-lilies, so simple, so full of style, of understanding and love, that many drawings by others lost beside it. But this exhibition shows clearly that there are many clever landscape painters among the younger artists.

Duchâtel among others and Neuhuys.

Albert Neuhuys had a large figure drawing, that was splendid, a girl and two children.

A new apparition was the work of Clara Montalba. Hers is a peculiar talent, it reminds me of Rochussen in some respects.

At Mr. Tersteeg's I saw also many fine things by Valkenburg, Neuhuys, etc. etc. J. Maris had beautiful things at the exhibition; for instance two little girls in white at the piano, and a mill in the snow. Willem Maris I met at de Bock's. What a beautiful sketch the latter has by him, a road in winter with a little figure under an umbrella. By chance Bosboom has seen my studies, and has given me some hints about them. I only wish I had more opportunity of receiving such hints. Bosboom is one of those people who has the talent to impart knowledge to others, and make things clear to them.

There were three or four good drawings of his at the exhibition. I stayed at the Hague until Thursday morning, then I went to Dordt, because from the train I had seen a spot I wanted to draw, namely, a row of mills. Though it was raining I managed to finish it, and so I have brought at least a souvenir from my little trip.

At Stam's I found Ingres paper twice as thick as the ordinary kind, one can work better on it. But alas it is white. Would there be any chance of your sending sometime, some of that same kind which is the colour of unbleached muslin or linen? Like a few sheets that were in that former lot you brought me, and like those on which the " Exercices au Fusain " are printed. If one draws on the white paper, one must first wash in the whole page with a flat tone before one begins.

So I have been to the Hague; perhaps it was a beginning of a more serious relation with Mauve and others. I hope so. A hand-shake in thought; my hearty thanks for your faithful help in this matter. Because of the expenses perhaps I never would have gone, or at least have postponed it.

Yours,

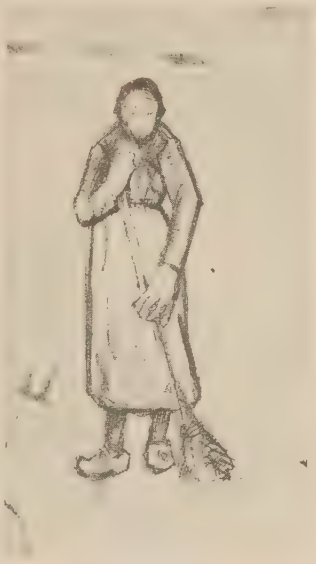
Vincent.

De Bock was very pleased with the drawings by Millet which he bought from you.

Dear Theo, (Etten August '81).

Though it is only a short time since I wrote to you, I have now some news to tell you.

That is to say there has come a change in my drawing, in my technique as well as in its results. In reference also to some things Mauve told me, I have begun to work from the living model again. I have been fortunately able to persuade several persons here to sit for me, for instance, Piet Kaufman, the gardener. The careful study of the "Exercices au Fusain," by Bargue, the copying of them, over and over again, has given me better insight in the drawing of the figure. I have learned to measure and to observe, and to seek for great lines. So what seemed to be impossible before is becoming gradually possible now, thank God.



Five times over I have drawn a man with a spade, "Un Bêcheur," in different positions, twice a sower, twice a girl with a broom. Then a woman with a white cap who is peeling potatoes, and a shepherd leaning on his staff, and finally an old sick farmer sitting on a chair near the hearth, with his head in his hands, and his elbows on his knees. And of course I shall not stop at that, when a few sheep have crossed the bridge the whole flock follows. Diggers, sowers, ploughers, male and female, that is what I must draw continually. I have to observe and to draw everything that belongs to country life. Like many others have done before, and are doing now. I do not stand helpless before nature any longer, as I used to do.

From the Hague I brought some crayon in wood (like pencil) and that is what I use most just now. I also begin to touch up my work with a brush and stump, with a little sepia and India ink, and

now and then with a little colour. It is a fact that the drawings I have made lately resemble very little those I used to make until now. The size of the figures is about that of the "Exercices au Fusain."

As to landscape, I think it will in no way lose by this, on the contrary it will gain.

Enclosed a few little sketches to give you an idea about it. Of course I must pay the people who pose for me. It is not much, but as it is a daily recurrence it is an expense the more as long as I do not succeed in selling drawings.

But as it seldom happens that a figure becomes a total failure, I think the expenses of the model will pretty soon be repaid.

For at the present time there is some demand for anyone who has learned to attack a figure and to put it well on paper. I need not tell you that I only send you these sketches to give you an idea of the pose. I scribbled them in no time, and I see there is much to be said against the proportions, at least more than in the real drawings. I had a nice letter from Rappard, who seems to be hard at work; he sent me some very good landscape sketches. I wish he would come back here for a few days.

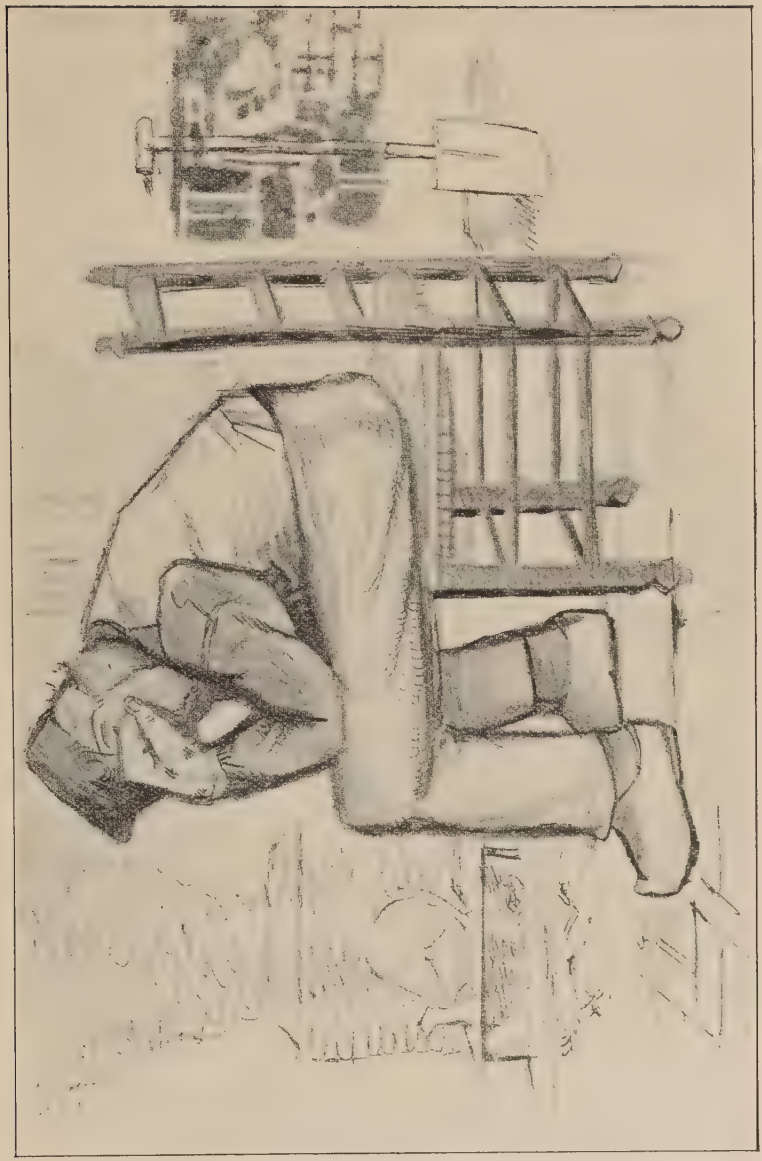
This is a stubble-field, where they are ploughing and sowing, I made rather a large sketch of it, with a thunder-storm overhead.

The two other sketches are poses of diggers.

I hope to make several more of them.

The other sower has a basket.

Above all I should like to have a woman pose with a seed



basket, to draw that little figure which I showed you last spring, and which you see in the foreground of the last sketch.

Well, as Mauve calls it, " the factory is in full swing."

Please do not forget the Ingres paper of the colour of unbleached linen. Write soon and receive a handshake in thought,

Yours,

Vincent.

151

Dear Theo, (August.)

As the whole family is writing to you again, I too enclose a little note. I heartily hope you are well, and will be able to find a half-hour's time to write to me again.

I will tell you now what I have been doing since I wrote you last.

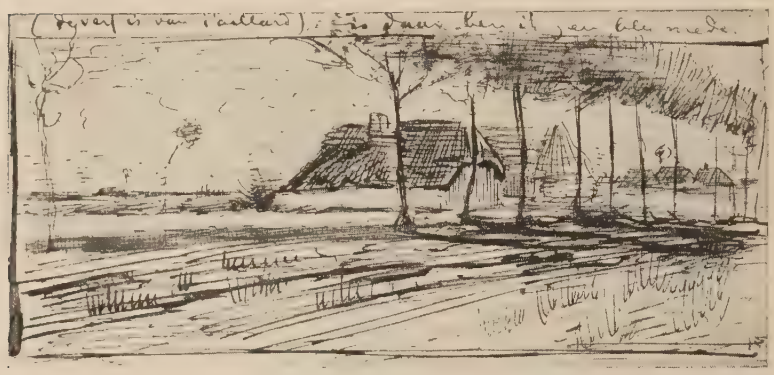
In the first place two large drawings, (crayon and a little sepia) pollard-willows—somewhat like the sketch below.

Then another one in the length, of the road to Leur. I also had a model again a few times, a digger, and a basket-weaver. And then I received last week from Uncle in Prinsenhage, a painting box, that is still very good, certainly good enough to begin with (it is Paillard's paint). I am very glad to have it.

I started at once to make a kind of water-colour, like the sketch below.

I am very happy to get models. I am also trying to get a horse and a donkey.

That thick Ingres paper I mentioned is especially good for painting in water-colour, and it is much cheaper than any other.



Still I am not in a hurry for it, for I brought a supply from the Hague, but alas it is plain white.

Well, you see I am hard at work.

Uncle goes to the Hague to-morrow, and will perhaps talk over with Mauve the question of my coming up to see him again.

And now adieu. I have walked very far to-day, and am very tired, but I would not let the letter go without enclosing a word.

I hope things are well with you, a handshake in thought,

Yours,

Vincent.

152

Dear Theo, [Undated.]

I was very glad to get your letter just now, and as I intended to write to you anyhow soon, I do it at once in answer to yours.

I was delighted to hear you had sent the Ingres paper. I have some left, but it is not the right colour.

I was very glad to hear what Mr. Tersteeg said about my

drawings, and I certainly was no less glad that you yourself found progress in the sketches I sent you. If that is really so, I hope certainly to work very hard, so that neither you nor Mr. Tersteeg need take back that favourable opinion. I will try hard not to disappoint you in this.

Nature always begins by resisting the artist, but he who really takes it seriously does not allow himself to be led astray by that resistance, on the contrary it is a stimulus the more to fight for the victory and at bottom nature and a true artist agree. But nature certainly is "intangible"; yet one must seize her, and that with a strong hand. And then after having struggled and wrestled with nature, sometimes she becomes a little more docile and yielding. I do not mean to say that I have reached that point already; no one thinks it less than I do, but somehow I get on better. The struggle with nature sometimes reminds one of what Shakespeare calls "Taming the Shrew" (that means to conquer the opposition by perseverance, *bongré et malgré*). In many things but especially in drawing I think that "serrer de près vaut mieux que lâcher."

More and more I feel that the drawing of the figure is a good thing that indirectly has a good influence on the drawing of landscape. If one draws a willow as if it were a living being, and it really is so after all, then the surroundings follow in due course, if one has only concentrated all one's attention on that same tree, and does not give up until one has brought some life into it.

Enclosed you will find a few sketches. At present I am working on that road to Leur. Now and then I try water-colour and sepia, but that does not succeed all at once.

Mauve has gone to Drenthe. We arranged that I should come to see him there as soon as he writes to me, but perhaps he will come to spend a day at Prinsenhage before. I went to see that picture by Fabritius at Rotterdam on my last trip, and I am glad that you had an opportunity of seeing that drawing by Mesdag. If the drawing by Mrs. Mesdag, about which you write, represents yellow roses on a moss ground, then I have seen it at the exhibition, and it is very beautiful and very artistic indeed. What you say about de Bock I think quite true. It is also my opinion about him, but I had not been able to put it in words as well as you did in your letter.

If he could and would concentrate himself, he would certainly be a better artist than he is now. I told him plainly: "De Bock, if you and I apply ourselves for a whole year on drawing the figure, then at the end we shall be quite different from what we are now; if we do not apply ourselves and just go on without learning anything new, then we do not even stay where we are, but slide back. If we do not draw the figure, or draw trees as if they were figures, we are people without backbone, or with a weak one. Do you think Millet and Corot, whom we both love so much, could draw figure, yes or no? I think those masters could do anything." And he had to agree with me, in part at least. However, I think he has worked very seriously on that Panorama, and though he will not acknowledge it, it will have a good influence on him in general.

He said a very curious thing about the Panorama, which made me feel great sympathy for him. You know the painter Destrée? The latter had come with a very pedantic air towards de Bock, and had said, of course in a very haughty, but yet bland and intolerably condescending tone: "de Bock, they have asked me too to paint that Panorama, but as it is such an inartistic thing I thought I had to refuse it." At which de Bock answered: "Mr. Destrée, what is easier, to paint a Panorama, or to refuse to paint a Panorama, what is more artistic, to do it, or not to do it?" I do not know if these were the exact words, but certainly the answer was something like this, and I thought he hit it right. And I have as much respect for it as for your conduct in regard to the elder and wiser members of your society, which you have left to the devices of their own age and wisdom, while you yourself have carried out the thing in a younger and more energetic way. That is true philosophy, which makes one act like de Bock and you did in such a case, such philosophy can be practical at the same time; like Mauve says: "painting is drawing at the same time."

My paper is full, so I finish, and will go out for a walk. My heartiest thanks for your effective help. A handshake in thought, believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

Dear Theo, Etten 9/3 1881.

There is something in my heart that I must tell you; perhaps you know about it already and it is not new for you. I want to tell you that this summer a deep love has grown in my heart for K., but when I told her this, she answered me that, to her, past and future remained one, so she never could return my feelings.

Then there was a terrible indecision within me what to do. Should I accept her "no, never never," or considering the question as not finished or decided, should I keep some hope and not give up?

I chose the latter.—And up to now I do not repent of that decision, though I am still confronted by that "no, never never." Of course since that time I have met with many "petites misères de la vie humaine," which written in a book would perhaps serve to amuse some people, but can hardly be termed a pleasant sensation if one has to experience them oneself.

However, until now I am glad that I left the resignation of the "how not to do it" system to whoever may like it, and for myself kept some courage.

One of the reasons why I did not write to you about it before is that my position was so vague and undecided, that I could not explain it to you. But now we have reached the point where I have spoken about it, besides to her, to father and mother, to Uncle and Aunt S., and to Uncle and Aunt at Prinsenhage.

The only one who told me, but very officiously and in secret, that there really was some chance for me, if I worked hard and had some success, was somebody from whom I did not expect it in the least: Uncle Vincent. He had rather liked the way in which I took K.'s "no, never never"—not taking it too seriously, but rather in a humorous way. Well, I hope to continue to do so, and to keep melancholy and depression far from me, meanwhile working hard, and since I have met her I get on much better with my work.

I told you that my position has become more sharply outlined; I think I shall have the greatest trouble with the elder persons, who consider the question as settled and finished, and will try to force me to give it up. For the present I believe they will be very considerate to me, and keep me dangling and put me off with fair

promises, until the silver wedding of Uncle and Aunt takes place in December. Then I fear measures will be taken to cut me off.

Pardon me these rather hard expressions, which I use to make the situation clear to you: I admit that the colours are somewhat harsh, and the lines somewhat forcibly drawn, but it will give you a clearer insight in the question than if I beat about the bush. So do not accuse me of disrespect towards the elder people. I only believe that they are decidedly *against* it; they will take care that K. and I cannot see each other or speak to each other or write to each other, because they know perfectly well that if we saw each other or wrote to each other, or spoke to each other, there would be a chance of K. changing her mind.

K. herself thinks she will never change her mind, and the elder people try to convince me that she cannot, yet they are afraid of that change. The elder people will only change in this affair, not when K. changes her mind, but when I have become somebody who earns at least fr. 1000 a year. Again forgive me the harsh outlines in which I draw things. You will perhaps hear it said about me, that I try to force the situation, and similar expressions, but who would not understand that forcing is absurd in love. No, that intention is far, very far from me. But it is no unreasonable or unjust desire to wish that K. and I might see each other, speak to each other, and write to each other, in order to become better acquainted, and in this way to get a better insight into whether we are suited for each other or not.

A year of free intercourse with each other would be beneficial for both of us, but the elder people are really obdurate on that point.

But now you understand that I hope not to leave a single thing undone, that may bring me nearer to her, and it is my intention:

To love her so long
Till she'll love me in the end.

Theo, are you perhaps in love too? I wish you were, for believe me, even the little miseries of it have their value. One is sometimes in despair, there are moments when one seems to be in hell, but—there are also other and better things connected with it. There are three stages.

1st. Not to love and not to be loved.
2nd. To love and not to be loved in return.[1]
3rd. To love and to be loved.

Now, I tell you that the second stage is better than the first,—but the third; that is the *best*.

Now, old boy, fall in love too, and then tell me about it. In my case give me your sympathy and take my part.

Rappard has been here; he brought water-colours with him that were very good. Mauve will come here soon, I hope, otherwise I go to him. I am drawing hard, and believe I am improving; I work more with the brush than before. It is so cold now that I draw exclusively from the figure indoors, a seamstress, a basket-weaver, etc.

A handshake in thought, and write soon, and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

Whenever you might fall in love and get in answer "no, never never," do not resign yourself to it; but you are such a lucky fellow that I trust it will never happen to you.

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Old boy, Etten 9/7 1881.

This letter is for you alone, you will keep it to yourself, will you not?

I would not be surprised, Theo, if my last letter made a more or less strange impression on you. But I hope the impression has been such as to give you a view, at least in part, of the whole situation. With long straight charcoal strokes, I tried to indicate the proportions and plans: when the necessary auxiliary lines have been traced then we brush off the charcoal with a handkerchief or a wing, and begin to draw the more intimate outlines.

So this letter will be written in a more intimate, less harsh and angular tone than the former.

In the first place I must ask you, if it astonishes you in the least

[1] That is my case.

that there is a love serious and passionate enough, not to be chilled by many "no, never nevers"?

I suppose far from astonishing you, this will seem very natural and reasonable.

For love is something positive, so strong, so real that it is as impossible for one who loves to take back that feeling, as it is to take his own life. If you answer this by saying: "But there are people who put an end to their own life," I simply answer you this: "I really do not think I am a man with such inclinations."

Life has become very dear to me, and I am very glad that I love. My life and my love are one. "But you are confronted by a 'no, never never,'" is your reply. And my answer to that is: "Old boy, for the present I consider that 'no, never never' as a block of ice that I press to my heart to thaw it."

To decide which will win, the coldness of that block of ice or the warmth of my heart, that is the delicate question, about which I can give no decision as yet, and I wish that other people would not speak about it, if they can say nothing better than, "the ice will not thaw," "foolishness" and more such nice insinuations. If I had an iceberg from Greenland or Nova Zembla before me, I do not know how many metres high and thick and wide, then it would be a difficult case, to clasp that colossus and press it on my heart to thaw it.

But as until now I have not seen an ice colossus of such dimensions loom up across my course, I repeat as she with her "no, never never," and all is not many metres high and thick and wide, and if I measured well might easily be clasped, I cannot see the "foolishness" of my behaviour. As for me I press the block of ice "no, never never" to my heart, I have no other choice, and if I try to make it thaw and disappear,—who can object to that??? What physical Science has taught them that ice cannot be thawed, is a puzzle to me.

It is very sad that there are so many people who object to it, but I do not intend to get melancholy over it, and to lose my courage. Far from it.

Let those be melancholy who will. I have had enough of it, and will only be glad as a lark in spring! I will sing no other song but: "Aimer encore"! Theo do you like that "no, never never," indeed I think you don't. But there seem to be people who like it, and

perhaps unconsciously, "of course with the best intentions and for my own good," they occupy themselves in trying to wrench that ice from my breast, and unconsciously they throw more cold water on my ardent love than they are aware of.

But I do not think many pails of cold water will be able to cool my love soon, old boy —

Do you think it considerate of the family to insinuate that I must be prepared to hear soon, that she has accepted another richer suitor, that she has become quite handsome, and will no doubt be asked in marriage, that she has a positive dislike to me, if I go further than "brother and sister" (that was the utmost limit), that it would be such a pity if "meanwhile (!!!) I let a better chance go by (!!!) . . ."

Whoever has not learned to say "she, and no other" does he know what love is? . . . When they said those things to me, then I felt with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind: "she, and no other." Perhaps some will say, "you give evidence of weakness, passion, stupidity, ignorance of the world, when you say, 'she, and no other.' Have another string to your bow, try to get out of this difficulty." Far from me!—This my weakness be my strength. I will be dependent on "her, and no other"; even if I could, I should not want to be independent of her.

But she has loved another, and her thoughts are always in the past, and she seems to have conscientious scruples, even at the thought of a possible new love. But there is a saying, and you know it: "Il faut avoir aimé, puis désaimé, puis aimer encore."

"Aimez encore: ma chère, ma trois fois chère, ma bien aimée——"

I saw that she always was thinking of the past and buried herself in it with devotion. Then I thought: though I respect that feeling and though it touches and moves me, that deep grief of hers, yet I think there is some fatalism in it.

So it must not weaken my heart, but I must be resolute and firm, like a steel blade. I will try to raise "something new," which does not take the place of the old, but has a right to a place of its own.

And then I began,—at first crudely, awkwardly, but still firmly, and I finished with the words: K. I love you as myself,—then she said: "no, never never."

"No, never never," what is the opposite of it: *Aimer encore!* I cannot say who will win it. God knows, I only know this one thing: "that I had better stick to my faith." When it happened this summer, though I was not unprepared for it, it was at first as terrible a blow as a death sentence, and for a moment it absolutely crushed me to the ground.

Then in that inexpressible anguish of soul, rose a thought in me like a clear light in the night, namely this: whosoever can resign himself, let him do so, but he who has faith let him believe! Then I arose, not resigning but believing, and had no other thought than "she, and no other."—You will say: On what will you live if you win her, or perhaps: you will not win her. But no, you will not speak like that. He who loves lives, he who lives works, he who works has bread.

So I remain calm and confident through all this, and that influences my work, which attracts me more than ever, just because I feel I shall succeed. Not that I shall become anything extraordinary, but "ordinary," and then I mean by ordinary, that my work will be sound and reasonable, and will have a right to exist, and will serve to some end. I think that nothing awakens us to the reality of life so much as a true love. And whoever is truly conscious of the reality of life, is he on the wrong road? I think not. But to what shall I compare it, that peculiar feeling, that peculiar discovery of love? For indeed it is the discovery of a new hemisphere for a man, when he falls seriously in love.

And therefore I should wish that you were in love too, but then a woman must come into your life; however it is with that as with other things, who *seeks* will find, though the finding itself is a chance, and no merit of our own.

And then it is a great surprise when you have found someone, and—and—and—if you then find yourself, not before a "yes, and amen," but before a "no, never never," that is not pleasant at first, but terrible. But as Uncle Jan rightly says, the devil is never so black as he is painted, so it is also with a "no, never never."

Now when you have received and read this letter you must surely write to me soon, if you have not already done so, for since I have told you everything, I long very much for a letter from you. I do not think you will take in bad part what I have told you, but

rather that you have pretty well the same thoughts about the question of the necessity of a "she, and no other" in general.

However it may be, write to me soon, and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

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Old boy, [Undated.]

From your letter of to-day to father and mother, I cannot make out what you think of my last two letters. Just because you did not mention their receipt or enclose a letter for me, I suppose I shall soon get one from you. And in this case I think it much better that you will write to me after having read my two—or including this one—my three letters, which though written singly, complete each other, than if you had answered immediately the first one only. How cold and harsh my first letter must have sounded, and I suppose you must have then thought me very obstinate and obdurate. But was I wrong in this, and will you reproach me for it, that I did not lay open before you my most intimate and tender feelings, as you, oh man of business, would have received them during your daily fever of affairs, which is not exactly the mood in which to appreciate love stories. So I thought: no we must first awaken him, and only then sow the seeds of soft words in him. We must first prepare the soil for that man who "hammers his way in business." Therefore the first letter was as cold as a ploughshare. But as to the second, was I wrong in asserting that it would be more serious and more intimate? And now that we are speaking more intimately we will continue in that way.

. . . . . .

Your letter to father was rather melancholy, and to tell you the truth I did not understand it, and did not know what to make of it. Is there anything serious, yes or no? And some expressions astonished me, in the first place because it was you who used them, and secondly because you wrote them to father and mother.

For you more than anyone else keep all your "grandes et petites

misères de la vie humaine," to yourself, and *if* you spoke about them, it would be to those whom you know to be strong in the things in which you might feel more or less weak. I believe that if you feel yourself weak in anything, you would only confess that weakness to someone whom you know would be able to cure you of it. Besides, only this summer you told me yourself that you thought it better not to speak about the difficulties of life, but to keep them to yourself, not to lose your buoyancy, as you said. I thought that an energy that impressed me very much, though I was indeed far from sympathizing with it, and know too well that my need for sympathy has often induced me to seek it from people who instead of strengthening, unnerved me. Father and mother are very good at heart, but have little understanding of our inward feelings, and of your real circumstances as little as of mine. They love us with all their hearts—you especially, and we both, I as well as you, love them very much indeed, but alas, practical advice they cannot give us in many cases, and there are cases where with the best intentions they do not understand us. That is not our fault or theirs, but it is the difference in age and difference in opinion, and difference in circumstances. . . . But that our home is and remains our resting-place, come what may, and that we must appreciate it, and from our side respect that home, there I quite agree with you, though perhaps you did not expect such a candid declaration from me.

However there is a resting-place better, more necessary, more indispensable than our home with our parents, however good, however necessary, however indispensable it may be, and that is our own hearth and home. . . . You remember perhaps that we spoke this summer about women with a kind of respective desolation. That we felt or thought we felt:

" La femme est la désolation du juste."

And—and—I and perhaps you too, felt rather like Monsieur le Juste above mentioned,—whether this saying be true or untrue I am not able to decide, because since this summer I began to doubt, if indeed I knew distinctly " qu'est-ce que c'est qu'une femme, et qu'est-ce que c'est qu'un juste."

And I have resolved to examine these two problems, the result being that I often say to myself: " tu ne sais pas encore ce que c'est

qu'une femme. Tu ne sais pas encore ce que c'est qu'un juste, si non toutefois que tu n'en est pas encore un."

All of which is quite different from my opinion of this summer. Not I, but father Michelet says to all young men like you and me : "il faut qu'une femme souffle sur toi pour que tu sois homme. Elle a soufflé sur moi mon cher!

"Faut-il de même et par recontre qu'un homme souffle sur une femme pour qu'elle soit femme?

"Je le pense très certainement."

So, man of business, there is a love-story for you! Do you think it very dull and very sentimental? When I had firmly resolved not to leave her, even if it should cause her displeasure at first, not to turn away from her, when I clung only to that "she, and no other," and "aimer encore," then I felt a certain calm and firmness come over me.

Then my melancholy left me, then all things became new for me, then also my energy increased.

I know there are persons, who think I ought to resign myself, and that it is against the rules not to consider myself beaten; but if they say about my proposal of this summer "if you sing before breakfast you will cry before night," then you know the poem,

> He lost his feathers in a fight
> But know they grew again all right.

However, now it is one of the little miseries of human life for me, that I cannot go once in awhile to see her, or write to her, and that some people, who might have a good influence to undermine that "no, never never," on the contrary further that "no, never never." I wish that she found no sympathy anywhere for her "no, never never," and that everyone would join in efforts to bankrupt that "no, never never." That they would quite reduce it to a monument of warning to other "no, never never"-saying ladies, and to the encouragement of those that say: "aimer encore." But we have not arrived as far as that.

I should like it very much if you could persuade father and mother to less pessimism, and to more good courage and humanity, for they are awfully pessimistic, and call what I did this summer "premature and indelicate" (till I requested them quite firmly and decidedly not to use such expressions any more).

A word from you has perhaps more influence on them than anything I can say, and it would be so much better for them as well as for me, to let me go my way quietly.

They want me to stop all correspondence, for instance with Uncle and Aunt, of course I cannot promise such a thing, and even if I might stop writing for some time, I would certainly start again with new vigour afterwards.

She refuses to read my letters but—but—but the frost and the winter cold are too bitter to last very long.

I think it much more natural and sensible that when I spoke to her for the first time about these things, she at once uttered that "no, never never" so energetically. That very thing gives me the conviction that there was some fatal disease, and I hope I have touched to the quick that fatal disease of burying herself too much in the past,—now there follows a crisis of indignation, but the surgeon laughs in his sleeve and says: "Touché!" It is just between us however, Theo, she must not know that I laughed in my sleeve about the result of the touch of the knife. Towards her I am of course more or less repentant,—"did I hurt you? Oh, how brusque and rough I was? How could I be so?" That is my attitude towards her. A very repentant and humble letter to Uncle; but still I told him, "she, and no other." You will not betray me, brother? To consider it as if nothing had happened between us, that is all nonsense and humbug. None of that. Boy, I am so glad with my, "no, never never" I should like to shout with glee, but I must not show it, and must attack her again in some other way. But how to approach her, how to come near her? I must do it some day quite unexpectedly and unawares. For if I do not stick to the point, then the fatal evil of burying herself in the past comes back with sevenfold strength, and yet "aimer encore" is such a good thing, and worth all the efforts of one's soul. Now, I have been complaining a little about father and mother, but except that they do not understand the least bit about it all and do not understand anything of the "aimer encore," and could only call it "untimely and indelicate" until I put a stop to that, after all they are very good to me and kinder than ever.

But I would rather they could understand more of my thoughts and opinions about many things. Theirs is a system of resignation in many things in which I cannot resign myself. Now I think a

letter from you, speaking lightly about that "no, never never" would perhaps be very effective. One word from mother this summer would have given me the opportunity of saying many things to *her*, which could not be said in public.

But mother very decidedly refused to say that word, on the contrary she cut off every opportunity for me.

And she came to me with a face full of pity and with many comforting words, and I am sure she had prayed a beautiful prayer for me, that I might receive strength for resignation.

But until now that prayer has found no hearing, but on the contrary I have received strength for action.

You understand that a man who wants to act, cannot quite approve of the fact that his mother prays for resignation for him. And that he also thinks her words of comfort a little out of place as long as he does not despair, but on the contrary says from the bottom of his heart: "Je n'accepte point le joug du désespoir." I wish she had not prayed for me, but had given me the chance of having an intimate conversation with *her*. And instead of agreeing to that "no, never never," she might have taken my part with a little more sympathy, when K. spoke to her in confidence, and poured out her heart to her. I tell you these things to convince you that an energetic word from you to father and mother would be of great help to me. For it is true, is it not, brother, that we are not only brothers, but friends and congenial spirits?

Since I really love there is more reality in my drawings, and I sit writing to you now in the little room with quite a collection around me of men, women, and children from the "Heike," etc. —Mauve is ill, but father and mother have invited him to come here for recovery as soon as he can undertake the journey.

Adieu. Write soon, a handshake in thought, believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

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Dear brother, [Undated.]

I received your letter, but I think it is only an answer to my first one.

In number two and three you found already a scolding in reply to your advice: "beware that you do not build too many castles in the air, before you are sure that you do not work in vain."

Because you have had the scolding already I will not repeat it. May it do you good, old boy. . . .

Since the beginning of this love I felt, that unless I gave myself up to it entirely, without afterthought, without any restriction, with all my heart, entirely and for ever, there was no chance for me whatever, and even so my chance is slight. But what is it to me whether my chance is slight or great? I mean must I consider this when I love? No—no reckoning, one loves because one loves.

To love—*quelle chose!*

Just imagine what a real woman would think, if she realized that someone proposed to her, yet with reserve,—would she not answer him with something worse than "no, never never!" Oh, Theo, don't let us talk about that; when you and I are in love, we love, that is all!

Then we keep our heads clear, and do not cloud our minds, nor do we hide our feelings, nor smother the fire and light, but simply say: Thank God, I love.

Imagine what a real woman would think of a lover who came to her confident of the result. I would not give a penny for his success with anyone like K., and I would not change places with him, not for 100,000 guilders in the bargain.

I sent you a few drawings, because I thought you might find something of Brabant in it.

Now tell me why they do not sell, and how can I make them saleable? For I should like to earn now and then some money for a railroad ticket so as to go and fathom that "no, never never."

But you know you must not tell that intention of mine to the Right Rev. J. P. S. For if I come very unexpectedly he would possibly not be able to do anything but close his eyes to it. Such a Right Rev. J. P. S. becomes in so far as one of the parties is concerned quite a different person, when one falls in love with his daughter, than before.

He then becomes quite gigantic, and acquires unheard of proportions.

But that does not change the fact that if one loves his daughter,

one is not afraid *of going to him, but is afraid of not going to him,* even though one knows he can do the most terrible things in the said case.

Well, at present I begin to feel, "that I have a draughtsman's fist," and I am very glad I possess such an instrument, though it may be unwieldy still. The Ingres paper is very good.

So they usually call you "lucky fellow." That is also a "petite misère de la vie humaine."

And you doubt if you really are so or not.

But what reason have you to doubt it?

A lucky fellow who complains—without reason!

And me they call melancholy, and I ask you to congratulate me on my "never, no never."

So, you lucky one, what is lacking to your luck? In your comparison with the strawberry you knew how to explain quite piquantly what it is to fall in love. It is very finely put, but—to be in love and opposed by a sixfold "no, never never," and besides a Right Rev. J. P. S. who asks what means of subsistence I have in "the case in question," for so the Reverend calls it, or rather he does not even ask about them, because he (being a Philistine in the realm of art) thinks they do not exist at all—such being in love I tell you is not quite like gathering strawberries in spring. And that "no, never never," is not as sweet as spring air, but bitter, bitter as nipping winter frost. "This is no flattery," as Shakespeare would say.

Enough of it, the strawberry season has not arrived, yet I see strawberry plants, but they are frozen; will spring arrive and thaw them, and will they blossom, and then—then—then—who will gather them?

That "no, never never" has taught me, however, things that I did not know before, in the first place the enormity of my ignorance, and in the second place that women have a world of their own, and many other things. Also that there are means of subsistence. I should think it more considerate of people if they said (like the Constitution does "every man is considered innocent until he is proven guilty,") that they would consider a man to possess some means of subsistence until the contrary had been proved. They might say, this man exists—I see him, he speaks to me, the proof of his existence is that he is interested in a certain

case, for instance, "the case in question." His existence being clear and evident to me, I will accept as an axiom that this existence is due to some means, which he gets in some way or other, and for which he works. So I will not suspect him of existing without means of subsistence. But people do not reason in this way, especially not a certain person in question in Amsterdam. They want to see the means, in order to believe in the existence of the person in question, but the existence of the person in question does not prove to them his means. Well, this being so, we can for the present only show him a "draughtsman's fist," not to attack him with it, however, much the less to threaten him with it. But we must use that "draughtsman's fist" as well as we can.

But the "no, never never" riddle is in no way solved by this. To try just the opposite of some advice is often a very practical thing and gives one satisfaction. Therefore it is in many cases so useful to ask for advice. However there is some advice that can be used in its natural state, and does not require being turned inside out or upside down. The latter kind is very rare and very desirable for it still has some special peculiarities. The first kind can be found by the thousands everywhere, the latter kind is expensive, the first costs nothing and is delivered at free of charge at domicile by the ton. "But!!!"

Yours truly,

Vincent.

I finish this letter with a contra advice.

Whenever you love, do it without any reserve, or rather when you do fall in love, you will not think of any reserve.

Moreover, when you do love you will certainly not feel sure of success beforehand, you will be "une âme en peine," and yet you will smile. Whoever feels so sure of himself that he rashly imagines she is mine, before he has fought that soul's battle of love, I repeat, before he wavers between life and death, on a high sea, in storm and thunder, he does not know what a real woman's heart is, and that will be brought home to him by a real woman in a very special way. When I was younger I once half-fancied myself in love and with the other half I really was, the result of this was many years of humiliation. May all this humiliation not have been in vain.

I speak as "one who has been down," from bitter experience and hard lessons.

Lucky boy! What is the matter, what aileth thee! Perhaps you were not really so lucky until now, but I think you are on the right road to become so. I guess this from the tone of your letters.

Theo, all fathers of girls possess a thing which is called the key to the front door. A very terrible weapon, which can open and shut the front door before mentioned, like Peter and Paul open the gates of heaven. Well, does this instrument also fit the heart of the respective daughters in question? Does that open or shut with the key of the front door? I think not, but God and love alone can open or shut a woman's heart. Will her's ever open, brother, will she ever let me in?—God knows, I cannot tell.

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Dear Theo, Etten November 12 1881.

One sentence in your letter of the 6th of November requires a separate answer.

You say: "In the present case I should not lose courage if I were you, but I would let the thing rest in regard to people whom it does not concern. I think that attitude will astonish those, who now interfere, and it will disarm them." This would have been new to me, if I had not already tried this tactic more than once before, and found it one of the best weapons. Now, however, I can only say: yes I knew as much, but now after that, what more do you know? For you must not forget that there are cases where it is not always sufficient to be on the defensive, especially when the strategics of the enemy are planned on the somewhat rash supposition that I certainly cannot go further than wait at the most in a defensive attitude.

Theo, if you were in love with the same sort of love as I, and, boy, why should you ever have another kind of love, then you would discover something quite new in yourself. Such as you and I, who as a rule generally associate with men, and you in a large way and I in a small, attend business of some kind, well, we are used to do most of our work with our brains,—with a certain diplomacy, with a certain sharp calculation. But now fall in

love, and look here, you will perceive to your astonishment that there is still another force that urges us on to action, that is the heart.

We are sometimes rather inclined to ridicule it, but it cannot be denied to be true, that especially when in love one says: I do not go to my head to ask my duty in this case, I go to my heart.

Now, I cannot believe that you would expect me to consider either my parents or her parents as persons "who have nothing to do with it," etc. On the contrary, I cannot suppose that it would be superfluous to talk it over with them, now and then.

Especially when, as is now really the case, their attitude is neither positive nor negative, that is to say, that they do nothing openly, for or against it. How they can bear this I do not understand, it is like being neither cold nor warm, and that is always a miserable thing.

Oh, how much precious time is perhaps lost in this way! If you would rather be counted among the persons "whom it does not concern and to whom I should let the thing rest," then I would even against your will still talk about it now and then to you, exactly in the same way as I do now with father and mother, and Uncle and Aunt S. When I spoke of it to father this summer he interrupted me with an anecdote of somebody who had eaten too much, and another who had eaten too little; it was quite out of season; and it was an anecdote without beginning or end, so that I thought: what is wrong with father?

It was perhaps from nervousness, as he had not expected it, yet it was under his eyes, so to say, that she and I had walked together and spoken together for days and weeks. Now are those eyes in this mood, clear seeing? I think not. If I were hesitating, doubtful, of two minds, I might agree with father's and mother's attitude. But now it is quite different. This my love, has made me resolute, and I feel energy, new healthy energy in me. Like everybody feels who really loves. So what I want to say, brother, is not more or less, than that I firmly believe that any man is unconscious of some peculiar great hidden force, deeply hidden in him, until sooner or later he is awakened by meeting someone of whom he says "she, and no other."

If one has more ambition and love of money than love, in my opinion there is something wrong with that man. If a man has

only love and does not know how to earn money, there is something wrong in him also.

Ambition and greed are partners within us that are very hostile to love. The germs of these two forces are in all of us from the beginning. Later on in life they develop generally in unequal proportions, in one love, in the other ambition and greed!

But we, you and I, at our age can do something to keep things in order within us.

My opinion is that love when it develops, when it comes to its full development, produces better characters than the opposite passion: Ambition and Co.

But even because love is so strong, we generally in our youth (I mean at 17, 18, or 20 years) are not strong enough to keep straight! The passions are the sails of the little ship you know. And he who in his twentieth year gives way entirely to his feeling, catches too much wind and his boat ships too much water and—and he sinks—or comes to the surface again after all.

On the contrary, he who hoists the sail, Ambition & Co, and no other, on his mast, sails through life on a straight course without accidents, without wavering until,—until at last, at last, circumstances arise which make him think: I have not enough sail, then he says: I would give everything I possess for another square of sail and I have not got it. He is in despair.

But now he remembers that he possesses another power, which he can use; he thinks of the sail which he despised until now, which he had put away with the ballast. And it is this sail that saves him.

The sail of love must save him, without hoisting that he cannot arrive. That first case of the man whose little boat capsized when he was 20 years old, and sunk, did it not?—no—lately it came again to the surface—is really that of your brother Vincent, who writes to you as one "who has been down, but yet came up again."

What kind of love was it I felt when I was twenty? It is difficult to define, my physical passions were very weak then, perhaps because of a few years of great poverty and hard work. But my intellectual passions were strong and I mean thereby that without asking anything in return, without wanting any pity, I only wanted to give, but not to receive. Foolish, wrong, exaggerated,

proud, rash, for in love one must not only give, but also take, and reversing it, one must not only take but also give. Whoever deviates either to the right or to the left, he falls, there is no help for it. So I fell, but it was a wonder that I got up again. What helped me more than anything else to recover my balance was the reading of practical books on physical and moral diseases. I got a deeper insight into my own heart and also into that of others. By and by I began to love my fellow-men again, myself included, and more and more my heart and soul revived, that for a time through all kinds of great misery, had been withered, blighted and stricken. And the more I turned to reality, and mingled with people, the more I felt new life reviving in me, until at last I met *her*.

There is written: love thy neighbour as thyself. One can deviate to the right or to the left, but both are bad. I think all for all is the real true thing,—that is *it*.—And now the two extremes; 1st to ask everything without giving, 2nd—to ask nothing but give everything. Two equally fatal, bad things, both damned bad.

Of course there are people who advocate one or the other of these extremes, the first produces those members of society which we call rascals, thieves, and usurers, etc. etc., the second produces Jesuits and Pharisees, male and female, also rascals, you know!

If you tell me: "take care that you do not get too fond of that 'no, never never,'" and you mean by that, take care that you do not give all without taking anything, then you are quite right, and my answer is: I made that mistake once, I gave up a girl and she married another, and I went away, far from her, but kept her always in my thoughts. Fatal.

But now grown wiser by experience I say: I must try if far from resigning myself, I cannot by strong patient energy come to a result which will give me more satisfaction. I will use all my powers to thaw that "no, never never."

Theo, in order to prove to you that I can discuss quite calmly, though I am in love, I say to you:

If she and I were sentimental and soft-hearted, then we would have already married and great misery would have come of it, poverty, hunger, cold, illness, etc., but oh, still it would be better for us to be together, than not to be together.

If violent passion urged me, and she yielded to it, that passion

would cool down, and my *lendemain de fête*, would be desolation, and hers a broken heart.

If she were a coquette and played with a man's heart, and the man did not see her game, that man would be a fool, but a sublime fool, if a fool can be sublime.

If I wanted her for other motives, money for instance, or sensuality, and if I thought: she cannot escape me for this or that reason, I would be the worst of all Jesuits and Pharisees (may I tell you meanwhile that it is not so between us two).

If we played at brother and sister, we would act like children, and it would be quite out of place.

If she would never and never return my love I would probably stay a bachelor always.

If I saw that she loved another man I would go far far away. If I saw that she took a man she did not love for his money, I would plead guilty to shortsightedness on my part, and I would say: I have mistaken a picture by Brochart for one of Jules Goupil, a fashion-print for a figure of Boughton, Millais or Tissot.

Am I as shortsighted as that???

But my eye is like yours, well trained and steady.

But if she and I rise to a new life with renewed energy, then the future is no longer dark.

When she with her lady's hand and I with my draughtsman's fist, are willing to work, then the daily bread will not be wanting for us, neither for her boy.

If I had had other motives when I proposed to her, she would have despised me, and now she does not despise me. But my third page is almost full and I have still something to ask. Boy, I must see her face again, and speak to her once more; if I do not do so soon, something will happen at the silver wedding that would perhaps do me great harm. Do not ask me to define what. If you were in love too, you would understand it; because you are not in love I would not be able to make it clear to you.

Theo, I want money for the trip to Amsterdam; if I have but just enough I go. Father and mother have promised not to oppose me in this, if I only leave them out of the matter, as it were. Brother, if you will send it to me, I will make lots of drawings for you from the Heike, and whatever you want.

And they would not get worse if the " no, never never " began

to thaw. For the best remedy for dessiner encore, is also aimer encore.

Could you help me with the money, boy? If it is only fr. 20, father will perhaps give me 10 more (leaving him out of the question pretending not to know) "et alors je décampe plus vite que ça. As-tu compris, mon cher! Crois-moi toujours,"

Yours,

Vincent.

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Dear brother, Friday November 18 1881.

If I could not give vent to my feelings now and then, I think the boiler would burst.

I must tell you something which if I had to keep it to myself would perhaps upset me, but if I can make a clean breast of it it will perhaps not be so bad. As you know father and mother on one side and I on the other do not agree about what must be done or not done in regard to a certain "no, never never."

Well, after having heard for some time the rather strong expressions, "indelicate and untimely" (just fancy that you were in love and they called your love indelicate, would you not have proudly resented it, and said: stop), this had ceased at my emphatic request not to use those expressions any more, but another term came up.

They say now "that I am breaking up family ties."

Well many a time I have told them earnestly, patiently and with feeling that such was not at all the case. It helped for a time, and then they began anew.

The fact that I "wrote letters" was the real grievance against me. But when they persisted in using so rashly and recklessly that miserable expression "breaking up family ties," I did the following.

For a few days I did not speak a word or take any notice of father and mother. Against my wish, but I wanted to make them feel how it would be if those family ties were really severed.

Of course they were astonished at my behaviour, and when they asked me about it I answered: See, *that is how it would be* if there were no tie of affection between us, but happily it does exist and

will not soon be broken so easily. But I beg you, consider now how miserable that expression, "breaking up of ties" is, and do not use it any more.

But the result was that father grew very angry, ordered me out of the room with a curse, at least it sounded exactly like it! When father gets in a passion he is used to having everyone give in to him, even I, but now I was quite determined to let him rage for once In anger father also said something, that I had better leave the house and go elsewhere ; but because it was said in a passion I do not attach much importance to it.

Here I have my models and my studio, elsewhere living would be more expensive, and my work more difficult, and the models would cost more. But if father and mother said in earnest to me: go, of course I would go. There are things which a man cannot put up with. . . .

Did you receive my drawings ? Yesterday I made another, a peasant boy who early in the morning lights a fire on the hearth over which a kettle is hanging, and still another, of an old man who puts kindling wood on the hearth. I am sorry to say there is still something harsh and severe in my drawings, and I think that *she*, her influence, must come to soften that. Well, boy, I suppose there is no reason to take that curse of father's so very seriously, perhaps I used too harsh a method to make father and mother feel what they would not hear. Well, I shake hands with you. Believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

159

Dear brother, Friday evening.

When I mailed my letter to you this morning I had a feeling of relief.

I had been in doubt for a moment, shall I tell him or not; buton thinking it over I came to the conclusion that it really was necessary. I sit writing to you now in the little room that is my studio, now that the other room is so very damp. When I look around I see the walls all covered with studies relating to one subject: "*Brabant types.*"

So that is a work I have started and if I were taken suddenly out of these surroundings I should have to start anew another thing and this one would remain half-finished! That may not be! I have been working here since May, I begin to know and understand my models, my work is progressing, but it has cost me a lot of trouble to get on so far.

And now that I have got so far father would say: because you write letters to K., and therefore make trouble between us (*for this is the chief reason*, for whatever they may say of my being too unconventional, or the like, it is just talk) so because difficulties arise I show you the door.

Is not that too bad, and would it not be ridiculous for that reason to stop a work that has been started and begins to succeed? No, no, that is not the way!

Besides, the disagreement between father and mother and myself is not so terrible, is not of such a nature that we could not stay together. But father and mother are getting old, and they have their prejudices and old-fashioned ideas, which neither you nor I can share any more. When father sees me with a French book by Michelet or Victor Hugo, he thinks of thieves and murderers, or of "immorality," but that is too ridiculous, and of course I do not let myself be disturbed by such sayings. So often I have said to father: just read then, if only a few pages from such a book, and you will be impressed by it yourself, but father obstinately refuses to do so. Just now while this love nestled into my heart, I read anew the book by Michelet, "L'Amour et la Femme," and so many things became clear to me that otherwise would have been riddles. I told father frankly that under the circumstances I attached more value to the advice of Michelet than to his own, if I had to choose, which of the two I would follow.

But then they bring up a story of a great uncle who was infected with French ideas, and who took to drink, and so they insinuate that I will follow the same career.

Quelle misère!

Father and mother are very good to me in this respect, that they do everything to feed me well, etc. Of course I appreciate this very much, but it cannot be denied that food and drink and sleep are not enough for a man, but that he longs for something nobler and higher, aye, he positively cannot do without it.

That higher feeling which I cannot do without, is the love for K. Father and mother argue in this way: *she says, "no," so you must resign yourself.* I do not see at all the necessity of this, on the contrary. And I would rather give up the work just begun and all the comforts of this home, than resign myself to not writing her or her parents.

Well, I write to you about it because at least my work certainly concerns you, for you are the one that has already given so much money to help me to succeed. Now, I am getting on, it progresses, I begin to see some light; and now I tell you, Theo, this threatens me, I ask no better than to work on quietly, but father seems to want to put me out of the house, at least he said so this morning.

A strong word from you can perhaps arrange this matter. *You* will understand what I tell you: that in order to work and to become an artist one needs *love.* At least one who wants sentiment in his work must in the first place feel it himself, and live with his heart.

But father and mother are harder than a stone on the matter of "means of subsistence," as they call it.

If there was the question of marrying immediately I certainly would agree with them, but *now* it is a question of thawing a "*no, never never,*" and that is what a means of subsistence cannot do. That is quite another thing, a matter of the heart, and therefore she and I must see each other, write to each other, and speak to each other, that is as clear as daylight, and simple and reasonable. And indeed I tell you (though they think me a weak character, a man of butter) nothing in the world will make me give up this love. No delaying from day to day, from week to week no *silent* waiting. The lark cannot be silent as long as he has a voice. What is to be done now?

Would it not be foolish, Theo, not to continue drawing those Brabant types, now that I am getting on with them, simply because father and mother disapprove of my love?

No—that must not be.

For Heaven's sake let them for once give in, it would be too foolish if a young man should sacrifice his energy to the prejudices of an old man. And really father and mother are prejudiced in this.

Now, brother, listen: it would be too bad if for that reason I should have to leave my work here and spend money elsewhere,

where things would be much more expensive, instead of earning by and by a little money for a trip to Amsterdam.

No, no, no, there is something wrong, it cannot be right that they want to put me out of the house just at this moment. There is no excuse for it and it would thwart me in my work. So I cannot allow it to go on. What would she think if she knew what happened this morning? She is so tender and kind that it pains her to say one unkind word, but if one so soft, so tender, so loving as she is roused,—*piquées au vif!* then woe to those who are the cause of this anger.

May it not be against me her anger is roused, dear brother. I think she begins to understand that I am neither thief nor criminal, but, on the contrary, am inwardly more quiet and sensible than I outwardly appear. She did not understand that in the beginning, —at first she really had an unfavourable impression of me, but now I do not know why, while the sky becomes clouded and overcast with quarrels and curses, there rises light from her side.

Well, boy, if you send me money for the journey, you will receive at once three drawings,—" Dinner Time," " Lighting the Fire," " Almshouse Man." So send the money if you can, for the journey will not be entirely in vain. If I have only 20 or 30 francs, I can at least see her face once more.

And if you can, write a few words about that sentence of banishment, for I should like so much to go quietly on with my work here; that is what I should like best. I want her and her influence in order to reach a higher artistic level. Without her I am nothing, but with her there is a chance. To live, to work, and to love are really one. Well, adieu, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

One word from you, from " Paris," will put some weight in the scale against prejudices.

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Dear brother, November 19 1881.

I just received your letter. Thanks for your sympathy, thanks for the money " for the ticket." Thanks for your opinion about my

drawings, though it is more favourable than I deserve. Continue writing me about my work. Do not fear to hurt me by remarks, I will take such criticism as proofs of sympathy, worth a thousand times more than flattery. You tell me practical things, from you I must learn to become practical, so preach me many a sermon, for I do not refuse to be converted and I am greatly in need of conversion.

I do not think I ever received money more gratefully than those ten guilders from you, for the thought was so unbearable to me, that if I had to go, I would be unable to; now I have at least one string to my bow. I should have gone long ago if I only had had those ten guilders. However I must be sure of *her* being at home when I go. Now I am corresponding continually with our sister Willemien who is on the look out and will warn me, for *she* is going to Haarlem and I will hear from W. when *she* goes back to Amsterdam.

Oh, Theo, there is so much depth in her character, but one does not see it at once. She, you and I, we all have an outer bark of lightheartedness, but inside is a trunk of firmer wood, and hers is of a fine grain! Well, we must see how things go.

If you too perhaps have a love-story, tell me all about it, and trust my discretion.

If I were not "one who has been down," but on the contrary one who has always stood firm, I would be more than useless to you, but as I have been in that mysterious deep well of misery of the heart, there is a shadow of a chance that I may be able to give you some practical advice in some affair of the heart.

I go to you for help with my drawings and practical affairs, who knows if I for my part cannot be of some use to you in relation to some difficulties in love.

I for myself learn much from father Michelet. Be sure to read "L'Amour et la Femme," and if you can get it, "My Wife and I," and "Our Neighbours" by Beecher Stowe, or "Jane Eyre" and "Shirley" by Currer Bell. Those people can tell you more and better things than I.

The men and women, who may be considered to stand at the head of modern civilization, for instance Michelet and Beecher Stowe, Carlyle and George Eliot and so many others, they call to you: "Oh, man, whoever you are, who carries a heart in your

bosom, help us to found something real, eternal, true; limit yourself to one profession and love one woman only. Let your profession be a modern one and create in your wife a free modern soul, deliver her from the terrible prejudices which chain her. Do not doubt of God's help, if you do what God wants you to do, and God wants us in these days to reform the world by reforming the morals, by renewing the light and the fire of eternal love. By that means you will succeed and at the same time have a good influence on those around you, be the number large or small according to your circumstances." In my opinion these are the words that Michelet says to us in general. We are full-grown men now and are standing like soldiers in the rank and file of our generation. We do not belong to the same as father and mother and Uncle Stricker do, we must be more faithful to the modern than to the old one, to look back towards the old one is fatal. If the elder people do not understand us that must not upset us, and we must go our own way against their will, later on they will say of their own accord: yes, you were right after all.

Though perhaps you will think me now in some things rather strong, in many other things you will find me very stupid and ignorant, alas in this feverish and hurried modern life we become so one-sided. But should you or I doubt if we had the right to propose to a girl, and should we doubt of our success in the end?

It surely is presumptuous to be sure of oneself, but one certainly may believe: my soul's anguish will not have been in vain, and I will fight my battle notwithstanding all my own weaknesses and faults, I will fight as well as I can.

If I fall ninety-nine times, the hundredth time I shall rise up. And what are they talking about the means of subsistence, as if I had none? What artist is there who has not struggled and toiled, and what other way is there but struggling and toiling to get a footing.

And since when has a draughtsman no chance of earning his living? I began again to draw a man busy digging potatoes in a field. And I put in a little more of the surroundings. Some bushes in the background, and a streak of sky.

I cannot tell you, boy, how beautiful that field is! When I shall have earned a little more money and am able to spend more on models, I tell you I shall make still quite different things.

But it is hard work for the models too, I tell you. The more so because those I have are not models by profession, and perhaps so much the better for that. If you ever have a chance of getting somebody interested in my work, I think you can now begin to speak about me with some assurance. But in order to do better work I shall have to spend more on models. Now I spend 20, 25 or 30 cents a day, but I cannot do that every day, and it really is not enough; by spending a little more I could make more rapid progress.

Well, this winter I shall not be able to work in the open air with a model, but I can work indoors, and that is beautiful too. Once more thanks for the money, boy! It is very kind of you and very humane! A hearty handshake in thought, and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

161

Dear brother, Etten November 23 1881.

I am very glad that you wrote to father and mother about a few things as I asked you. I think it can only have a good influence,—at least gradually. Of course you understand that I am not the man intentionally to grieve father and mother with anything. When I must do something in opposition to their wishes and which often grieves them without cause, I feel very sorry for it myself.

But do not think that the late regrettable scene was only caused by hot temper. Alas, previously when I declared that I would not continue my study in Amsterdam, and afterwards in the Borinage, when I refused to do what the clergymen there wanted me to, father said a similar thing. So there is indeed a lasting deep-rooted misunderstanding between father and myself. And I believe that it never can be *quite* cleared up. But on both sides we can respect each other, because we agree in so many things, though sometimes we have quite different, aye, even opposite ideas.

So I do not consider father as an enemy, but as a friend, who would be still more my friend if he were less afraid that I would "infect" him with French "errors" (?) I think if father

understood my real intentions, I could often be of some use to him, even with his sermons, because I sometimes see a text in quite a different light. But father thinks my opinion entirely wrong, out of order, and systematically rejects it.

Now in regard to the "case in question" as Uncle S. calls what happened between K. and me, I must tell you that I have risked an attack on Mr. S. above mentioned. By means of a registered letter; I was afraid unregistered letters would be ignored, but this one he will be obliged to read, and in it I have tried to draw his attention to some points which I fear he overlooked, or which he would take no notice of. It is a very "undiplomatic" letter, very bold, but I am sure it will at least make an impression on him. But perhaps at first it will cause him to use a certain expletive which he certainly would not use in a sermon.

There really are no more unbelieving and hard-hearted and worldly people than clergymen and especially clergymen's wives (a rule with exceptions). But even clergymen have sometimes a human heart under an armour of triple steel.

But I am in a terrible suspense and am quite ready to go to Amsterdam, but as the journey is very expensive I may not waste my powder, and the trip to Amsterdam is my reserve if my letter has no effect.

Do you know that Uncle S. is really a very clever man, in fact an artist? His books are very good and give proof of deep feeling. This summer I read a little book he had just published on the "minor prophets" and a few of the other less known books in the Bible. So I certainly hope that after some time has passed, there will be more sympathy between us than has been the case hitherto.

The letter I received from him a few months ago was not unsympathetic or written in anger, but he wrote very positively, "her *no* is quite decisive." But when notwithstanding this letter I continued to write to K., he thought he would put a spoke in my wheel by intervention of Prinsenhage.

This spoke did not prove strong enough. Not that lever was able to lift me from the ground.

A propos! you must write to me soon. I have often thought over what I wrote to you.

If you thought that I wanted to insinuate that if a man's

passions were for instance, ambition in business or financial affairs, he must clip their wings, tone them down, or quite overcome them, you were mistaken. On the contrary those passions must bear more and a better kind of fruit. They must not decrease, but be counter-balanced by love. "Greed" is a very ugly word, but that demon does not let anybody alone, and I would be greatly astonished if it had not sometimes tempted you and me, even so that for the moment we were inclined to say: "Money is the ruler, money can do everything, money is No. 1." Not that you or I really bow to that Mr. Mammon and serve him, but it is true that he worries you and me a great deal. Me, by poverty through many a year, you through a high salary. These two things have in common the temptation to bow to the power of money. We may be more or less strong in those temptations, but I hope neither you nor I are destined to become entirely the prey of that money devil, but will he not get some hold on us? Now that money devil may not play you the trick of making you think it a crime to earn much money, and making me think that there is some merit in my poverty. No indeed, there is no merit in being so slow in earning money as I am, and I will have to remedy that, and to do so you will give me many a useful hint I hope.

But it certainly is my conviction that your attention, your best, your most concentrated attention must be centred at this time on the development of a vital force, that is still slumbering within you, Love. For indeed it is of all powers the most powerful, it makes us only seemingly dependent,—the truth is: there is no real independence, no real liberty, no steady self-reliance, except through Love. I say through Love, our sense of duty becomes clear to us, and our work distinct, and by loving and fulfilling the duties of love we perform God's will. In the Bible there is not written in vain, "love will cover a multitude of sins," and again "in Thee O God will be mercy, that Thou wilt be feared." But I think you will derive more profit from again reading Michelet, than from the Bible.

As for me I would not miss Michelet for anything in the world. It is true the Bible is eternal and everlasting, but Michelet gives such very practical and clear hints, directly applicable to this hurried and feverish modern life in which you and I find ourselves,

that he helps us to make rapid progress, and we cannot do without him.

And the Bible consists of different parts and there is progress from each to each, there is a difference for instance between Moses and Noah on one hand, and Jesus and Paul on the other. Now take Michelet and Beecher Stowe, they do not tell you the Gospel is of no value any more, but they teach how it may be applied in our time, in this our life, for you and for me for instance. Michelet even expresses things completely and aloud, of which the Gospel only whispers to us the germ.

You must not be astonished when even at the risk of your taking me for a fanatic, I tell you that in order to love, I think it absolutely necessary to believe in God. To believe in God (that means not that you should believe all the sermons of the clergymen, and the arguments and Jesuitism of the "bégueules dévotes collet montées," far from it), to believe in God for me is to feel that there is a God, not a dead one, or a stuffed one, but a living one, who with irresistible force urges us towards "aimer encore," that is my opinion.—

I have sent Mauve a drawing of a man who digs potatoes in the field; I wanted to give him some sign of life from me. I wish he would come soon. As soon as he will have seen my studies I will send you some again. If you do not like my writing you so often and so long, then say stop, but perhaps there will soon come another reason for stopping, for instance when all the time that remains for correspondence will have to be devoted to *her*. These very long letters will not continue for ever.

It is so curious that I am entirely in the dark about what happens at Amsterdam: I mean that I do not know anything, but only *feel*. How can one feel things at a distance? Aye, I can give you no explanation of that, but only fall in love yourself, and then you will perhaps also hear voices in the distance, and see little things which make you surmise larger ones, as one guesses there is a fire from seeing the smoke. Luckily the weather is warm and calm, that has a beneficial influence on people. If it were biting cold with a north wind my "case in question" would be worse off.

Meanwhile the silver wedding of Uncle and Aunt S. is approaching, father and mother intend to go there. I am very glad you have written to them before that time, for I would rather not have them come out with their "conscientious objections" about "the

untimeliness and indelicacy" of my love. Hoping to hear from you again, believe me, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

You may be sure that I try very hard to change many things in myself. Especially the sad state of my money affairs, and then I also think it would be good for me to associate more with other people.

Now the best and most effective way of bettering myself financially is by working hard. "Travaillez, prenez de la peine, c'est le fonds qui manque le moins." But that alone is not sufficient, or rather there are still other things for which I must work. Perhaps it is not bad that I have lived so long "under the ground" as it were. That I have been "one who has been down." But now I need not go back into the abyss, and I think it right to do away with all melancholy and to take a somewhat broader and more cheerful view of life, walking on level ground, and to renew old relations as much as possible, and to enter into new ones.

I will meet with a rebuff here and there, that may be, but I want to carry it through and try and struggle to the surface. I have often wondered whether it would not be possible and good to go for a time to the Hague, always considering this sphere of action here and the Brabant types as my real work. Notwithstanding all, I must keep hold of this, and now that I have grown familiar with it, I can find here subjects for years and years. But keeping at those Brabant types need not prevent my seeking new relations elsewhere, and even living elsewhere for a time.

All artists and draughtsmen do so.

Do you know what I should like? That K. began to say better things than "no, never never," then it would be possible to make plans for an artistic campaign. But as things are now I have in the first place to fight "Jesuitism," and must spend much of my energy therein; and in the second place, I cannot begin a second campaign before the "one in question" has been settled.

Do you think K. knows how terribly she unintentionally thwarts me? Well, she will have to make up for it afterwards!!! That means I count on her joining in many artistic campaigns with me, you see.

But I am afraid I am busy selling many skins of bears, that I have not killed yet. However there is one bear skin with which I want to speculate.

Lately father said to me, "My conscience has never allowed me to influence two people to marry." Well, as for myself, my conscience tells me exactly the opposite. Michelet luckily never had those conscientious scruples or else his books would never have been written. And out of gratitude to Michelet I promise that later on when I shall live more than now, with artists who so often "beat about the bush," I will do all I can to make it clear to them that they must marry. I add for the benefit of art dealers who are afraid that "keeping a family" costs more than not "keeping a family," that a married artist with his wife spends less, and is more productive than an unmarried one with his mistress.

Father Millet, do you think he had more expenses than so many Italians and Spaniards who "live in the desert where the sky is of brass and the soil of iron"! Is a wife more expensive than a mistress? You do pay the mistress anyhow, Messrs. Art-dealers, and those ladies laugh at you behind your back. "Qui est-ce qui vous tire des carottes, messieurs Goupil et Cie? Les femmes comme il en faut,"—or "les femmes comme il faut? On est sûr de périr à part, on ne se sauve qu'ensemble," that is one of those things Michelet says so simply. Sometimes it seems that he must be mistaken, but afterwards one sees he was right after all.

To the books of Michelet can also be applied the saying "il faut les avoir aimé, puis désaimé, puis aimé encore."

Do you think this mild weather will be mild enough to thaw the "no, never never," one of these days? Will they put me out on or shortly after the silver wedding party; God forbid.

Do you think that Trojan horse in the form of a registered letter has been taken inside the walls of Troy? And if so will the Greeks that were hidden in that horse, that is to say, the things that were written in that letter, will they storm the fortress?

I am in the greatest suspense on that point. Adieu.

Yours,

Vincent.

Dear Theo, The Hague December 1881.

As you see I write to you from the Hague.

I am here since Sunday. You know Mauve had planned to come and stay for a few days at Etten. I feared that something would prevent it or that the visit would be too short and I thought: I will try it in some other and I hope better way.

I said to Mauve: Do you approve of my coming here for a month or so, and troubling you for some help and advice now and then, after that time I will have overcome the first petites misères of painting, and then I will go back to the Heike.

Well, Mauve at once sat me down before a still life of a pair of old wooden shoes, and some other objects, and so I could set to work. And in the evening I go also to him to draw.

I am staying in a little inn near Mauve, where I pay fr. 30 a month for a room and breakfast. So if I may count on the fr. 100 from you, I can manage it.

And Mauve gives me hope that perhaps I shall soon make something that is saleable. Mauve said: "I always thought you a dullard, but now I see that it is not so," and I can assure you that this simple word of Mauve pleased me more than a cartload full of Jesuitical compliments would have done.

Perhaps Mauve will soon write to you himself.

"Meanwhile" I have been to Amsterdam. Uncle S. was rather angry though he gave vent to it in more polite words than "damn you." But notwithstanding this I am not sorry that I paid that visit. What must be done now, for you know I came back no less in love than I went, but not because she had encouraged me; on the contrary, she made me for a moment, or rather for twenty-four hours, profoundly miserable; but when I thought it over I seemed to see some light after all. When I thought it over I say, and that is more than romanticism or sentimentality does. But it looks less and less like gathering strawberries in spring, well the strawberries will no doubt come in due time.

I also went to see Mr. Tersteeg, and among the painters I met (the merry) Weissenbruch and Jules Backhuizen, and de Bock.

In short, Theo, I think I will become daily more realistic in everything. Thank God she is something very real too.

Mauve and Jet send you their compliments, believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

P.S.—As soon as Mauve allows it I will send you another drawing, but he says that I must keep all my *studies*, especially those of the figure. But within a relatively short time Mauve says I will learn to make little water-colours

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Dear Theo, [Undated.]

Perhaps you have been expecting a word from me, to hear what I am doing these days. And I for my part have been looking out for a word from you.

I still go everyday to Mauve's—in the daytime to paint, in the evening to draw.

I have now painted five studies and two water-colours, and of course a few more sketches.

I cannot tell you how kind and friendly Mauve and Jet are to me these days. And Mauve has shown and told me things which of course I cannot do at once, but which I shall gradually put into practice. But I must work very hard, and when I return to Etten I shall have to make a few changes, o.a. I must try to rent a large room somewhere where I can have sufficient distance, otherwise it is impossible to draw the figure, except for the study of certain fragments.

I am consulting with Mauve about this question and I will soon write you again about it.

The painted studies are still-life, the water-colours are made after the model, a Scheveningen girl.

Perhaps Mauve will write you himself sometime soon.

But, Theo, now it is almost a month since I have been here, and you must understand I have had a great many expenses. It is true Mauve has given me several things, paint, etc., but I had to buy a great deal myself, and I have also paid the model a

few days. And I needed a pair of shoes, and in short I have not watched every penny that I have spent. So I have overdrawn the 200 franc limit, as this whole trip costs me all in all 90 guilders. And now I think that father is rather hard up himself for the moment, and I do not know what to do. As for me I should like to stay here longer, aye even to rent a room here, for instance at

Scheveningen for a few months (and perhaps even longer) but as things are perhaps it is better for me to go back to Etten. I think Scheveningen and its types and figures so splendid. But the models are very expensive fr. 1.50 or fr. 2 a day, some even more. But one comes in contact here with painters, etc.

When I wrote to father this week for money, he thought it so very excessive, that I had spent fr. 90.

But you will understand, I think, that this is not unreasonable, for everything is so expensive. But I hate to have to account to father for every cent I spend, the more so because it is told to everybody, not without enlargements and exaggerations.

So I must say, Theo, that just now I am rather hard up here. And I write to tell you this.

I have no money to stay, I have no money to go back.

I shall wait a few days here at all events. And I will do as you wish.

Do you think it better for me to stay here a little longer? I should be very glad to do so, and I would not go back until I had made some progress.

If you want me to go back at once I will, but I must find a good room somewhere, somewhat larger than the little studio at home, then I can get along for some time alone, and go back to the Hague after a while.

At all events, Theo, through Mauve I have got some insight into the mysteries of the palette and of water-colouring. And that will repay me for the fr. 90 the trip has cost me. Mauve says that the sun is rising for me, but is still behind the clouds. Well, I have nothing to say against that.

Sometime I will tell you more about it, how kind and considerate Mauve has been to me.

So I shall wait a few days more for your answer.

But if it does not come within three or four days, I will ask father for money to go back at once.

I have several things to tell, which will possibly interest you about the manner of drawing after the model at Etten; but as I said before, I will write you soon again about it. Enclosed I send you little sketches after the two water-colours. I have full hope that I shall be able to make something saleable in a relatively short time. Aye, *I even think that these two would be saleable in case of need.* Especially one which Mauve has brushed a little. But I would rather keep them for a time myself, in order to remember better some things about the way in which they are done.

What a splendid thing water-colour is to express atmosphere and distance, so that the figure is surrounded by air and can breathe in it as it were. Now would you like me to make another set of water-colours for you here, I ask no better, but lodgings here, and

Dit zyn twee geschilderde studies.
't een is een terre cuite kinderkopje met een boulin
't andere een witte kool & een paar aardappels

the models and the paint and paper, etc. etc., everything costs money and I have nothing left. So send me a word at all events by return mail, and if you wish me to stay send me some money if possible.

I think I shall make better progress now that I have learned something practical about colour and the use of the brush.

And you can imagine that I hope Mauve will never have cause to regret his kindness. We will try to push ahead with some force. Well, adieu. I count on your writing at all events by return mail. (address A. MAUVE Uilenboomen 198). Believe me, with a handshake in thought,

Yours,

Vincent.

These are the subjects of two painted studies: a child's head with a fur cap in terra-cotta; and a white cabbage with potatoes, etc., around it.

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Dear Theo, (Etten December '81.)

I am afraid you sometimes cast aside a book because it is too realistic. Have pity and patience with this letter and read it through, though it may be rather crude.

As I wrote you from the Hague I have some things to talk over with you, now that I am back here. My trip to the Hague is something I cannot remember without emotion. When I came to Mauve my heart palpitated a little for I said to myself: Will he also try to put me off with fair promises, or shall I be treated differently here? And I found that he helped me in every way, practically and kindly, and encouraged me. Not however by approving of everything I did or said, on the contrary. But if he says to me: "this or that is not right," he adds at the same time: "but try it in this or that way," which is quite another thing than to criticize just for the sake of criticizing. If somebody says to you: "you are ill," that does not help you much, but if he says, "do this or that and you will recover," and his advice is no sham, that is the thing that will help you.

So when I left him I had a few painted studies and a few water-colours. Of course they are no masterpieces, but still I believe

that there is something sound and true in them, at least more than in what I have made before. And so I think this is the beginning of my making serious things. And as I now have a few more technical resources at my disposal, namely, paint and brush, all things seem as it were new to me.

But—now we must put that in practice. And then the first thing is I must find a room large enough to be able to take sufficient distance.

When Mauve saw my studies he said at once: "you are sitting too close to your model." That makes it in many cases almost impossible to take the necessary measures for the proportion, so that it is certainly one of the first things I must attend to. So I must try to rent a large room somewhere, either a room or a barn. And that will not be so very expensive. A labourer's cottage in these parts costs no more than fr. 30 a year, so I think that a room twice as large as such a cottage will cost fr. 60. And that is not beyond my reach. I have already seen a barn, but that had too many inconveniences especially in winter time. But at least if the weather is somewhat milder I could work there. And then I think, if difficulties might arise here, I could find models not only in Etten, but also in other villages here in Brabant.

However, though I love Brabant very much, I can also appreciate other figures than the Brabant peasant type. I again found, for instance, Scheveningen very, very beautiful. But now I am here and can live cheaper here. But I promised Mauve that I would try my best to find a better studio, and besides I must begin to use better paint and better paper now.

However, for studies and sketches the Ingres paper is excellent, and it is much cheaper to make my own sketch-books, in different sizes, than to buy them ready made.

I have some supply of that Ingres paper, but when you return that study to me, please enclose some of the same kind; you would greatly oblige me by doing so. But no dead white, rather the colour of unbleached linen, no cold tones.

Theo, what a great thing tone and colour is. And whoever does not learn to have a feeling for it, how far from real life he stands. Mauve has taught me to see many things, I did not see before, and what he has told me I will try to tell you sometime, for perhaps there are a few things which you do not see well either.

Well, I hope we shall discuss some artistic questions together some day. And you cannot imagine what a feeling of deliverance I begin to feel, when I think of what Mauve told me about earning money.

Just think how I have been struggling along for years in a kind of false position. And now, now there comes a dawn of real light. I wish you could see the two water-colours which I brought with me, for you would see they are water-colours like any other water-colours. There may be many imperfections in them; I will be the first to admit that I am very much dissatisfied with them, but still they are quite different from what I made before, and look more bright and clear, but that does not exclude the fact that others in the future may become brighter and clearer still, but one cannot do right away what one wants. It will come gradually.

Now I want to keep those two drawings for myself in order to compare them with those I am going to make here, for I must carry them at least as far as the ones I made at Mauve's.

But though Mauve tells me that after having struggled on for a few more months and then coming back to him, say in March, I shall then make saleable drawings, still I am now in a very difficult period. The expenses for model, studio, drawing and painting materials increase and I do not earn anything as yet.

It is true father has said that I need not worry about the necessary expenses, and father is very happy with what Mauve told him, and also with the studies and drawings that I brought back. But I think it very miserable indeed that father will have to pay for it. We hope of course that it will turn out all right, but still it is a heavy load on my mind. For since I have been here father has not by any means profited by me, and more than once he has bought for instance a coat or a pair of trousers for me, which I would rather not have had, though I needed them, but I do not want father to spend money. The less so because the coat or trousers in question do not fit, and are only of little or no use at all. Well that is again one of the little miseries of human life. Besides, as I told you before, I hate not to be quite free, and though I do not literally have to account to father for every cent, he always knows exactly how much I spend and what. And though I have no secrets I do not like to show my hand to everybody, though even my secrets are no secrets for those with whom I am in sympathy. But father is not

a man for whom I can feel for instance what I feel for you or for Mauve. Of course I love father, but it is quite a different sympathy from what I have for you or for Mauve. Father cannot sympathize with, or understand me and I cannot be reconciled to father's system,—it oppresses me—it would choke me. I too read the Bible now and then, just as I read Michelet or Balzac or Eliot; but in the Bible I see quite different things than father does, and what father draws from it in his academical way I cannot find in it at all.

Since the Reverend ten Kate translated Goethe's Faust father and mother have read that book, for now that a clergyman has translated it, it cannot be so very immoral??? (what does that mean?) But they consider it nothing but the fatal consequences of an ill-timed love. And neither do they understand the Bible. Now take Mauve for instance. When he reads something that is deep, he does not say at once: that man means this or that. For poetry is so deep and intangible that one cannot define everything systematically. But Mauve has a fine sentiment, and you see I think that sentiment worth so much more than definitions and criticism. And when I read, and really I do not read so much, only a few authors,—a few men that I discovered by accident, I do this because they look at things in a broader, milder and more lovable way than I do, and because they know life better, so that I can learn from them; but all that rubbish about good and evil, morality and immorality, I care so very little for it. For indeed it is impossible always to know what is good and what is bad, what is moral and what is immoral. The morality or immorality brings me involuntarily back to K.

I have already written to you that it seemed less and less like eating strawberries in spring. Well that is the truth; if I repeat myself you must forgive me, because I do not know exactly what I wrote to you about what happened at Amsterdam.

I went there thinking: perhaps the "no, never never" is thawing, the weather is so mild.

And on a certain evening I strolled along the Keizersgracht looking for the house and I found it. I rang the bell and heard that the family were still at dinner. But then I was asked to come in. But they were all there except K. And each had a plate before them, but there was not one too many and this little detail struck

me. They wanted to make me believe that K. was out, and had taken away her plate, but I knew that she was there, and I thought this rather like a comedy or a farce. After sometime I asked: (after the usual greeting and small talk) "But where is K.?" Then Uncle repeated my question, saying to his wife: "Mother where is K.?" And mother answered "K. is out." And for the moment I did not inquire further, and talked a little about the exhibition at Arti, etc. But after dinner the others disappeared and Uncle S. and his wife and the undersigned remained alone and settled down to discuss the case in question. Uncle S. opened the discussion as clergyman and father, and said that he was just about to send a letter to the undersigned, and that he would read that letter aloud. —But I asked again: "Where is K.?" (for I knew that she was in town). Then Uncle S. said "K. left the house as soon as she heard that you were here." Well I know her somewhat, but I declare that I did not know then nor do I know with certainty now, whether her coldness and rudeness was a good or a bad sign. This much I do know, that I never saw her so apparently or really cool, brusque and rude to anyone but me. So I did not say much and remained very calm.

Let me hear that letter, or not hear it, I said, I don't care much about it.

Then came the letter. The document was very reverend and very learned, there was really nothing in it, but that I was requested to stop my correspondence and the advice was given me to make very energetic efforts to put the thing out of my mind. At last the reading of the letter was finished. I just felt as if I had heard the clergyman in church after prancing up and down, with his voice say amen; it left me just as cool as an ordinary sermon.

And then I began, and said as calmly and politely as I could: yes I had heard those opinions before,—but now,—what further? But then Uncle S. looked up. He seemed full of consternation at my not being fully convinced that the utter limit of human capacity for feeling and thinking had been reached. According to him there was no "further" possible. So we continued, and Aunt M. said a word now and then, and I got somewhat excited and lost my temper. And Uncle S. lost his temper too, as much as a clergyman can do so. And though he did not exactly say "damn you," any other but a clergyman in Uncle S.'s mood would have said so.

But you know that in my way I love father and Uncle S., and so I shifted my position a little and I gave in a little, so that at the end of the evening they told me I could stay for the night if I wished. Then I said: "I am very much obliged, but if K. leaves the house when I come, I do not think it the time to stay here over night; I will go to my lodgings." And then they asked: "Where do you stay?" I said; "I do not know where as yet;" and then uncle and aunt insisted they would take me to a good and cheap place. And dear me, those two old people went with me through the cold foggy, muddy streets, and they showed me indeed a very good and very cheap Inn. I insisted on their not coming, and they insisted on showing me the way.

And you see there was something humane in that and it calmed me. I stayed in Amsterdam for two days and I had another talk with Uncle S., but K. I did not see once, she kept out of my way whenever I came. And I said that they must well know, though they wished me to consider the question as settled and finished, I for my part could not do so. And then they firmly and steadily answered, "I would learn to see that better afterwards."

Lately I read Michelet's "La Femme, la Religion et le Prêtre." Books like that are full of realism, but what is more real than reality itself, and where is more life than in life itself? And we who try our best to live, why do we not live more!

I felt quite lone and lorn during those three days in Amsterdam; I felt absolutely miserable, and that sort of kindness of uncle and aunt, and all those discussions, it was all so dismal. Till at last I began to feel quite depressed, and I said to myself: you are not becoming melancholy again, are you?

And then I said to myself: do not let yourself be stunned. And so, on a Sunday morning, I went for the last time to Uncle S. and said: "Just listen, dear Uncle, if K. were an angel she would be too high for me, and I do not think I could remain in love with an angel. If she were a devil I would not want to have anything to do with her. In the present case I see in her a true woman with a woman's passions and moods, and I love her dearly, and that is the truth and I am glad of it. As long as she does not become an angel or a devil, the case in question is not finished." And Uncle S. had not much to say in reply, and muttered something about a woman's passions. I do not remember well what he said about

it, and then he went to church. No wonder one becomes hardened there and turns to stone; I know it from my own experience. And so your brother in question did not want to be stunned, but notwithstanding that he had the feeling of being stunned, a feeling as if he had been standing too long against a cold hard whitewashed church wall. And—do you want me to tell you the rest, boy; it is somewhat risky to be a realist, but Theo, Theo, you yourself are also a realist, oh, bear with my realism. I told you that to some my secrets are no secrets. I do not take that back, think of me what you will, and whether you approve or not of what I did, that is of less consequence.

I continue. From Amsterdam I went to Haarlem and spent a few hours pleasantly with our little sister Willemien, and I walked with her, and in the evening I went to the Hague, and at about seven o'clock I arrived at Mauve's.

And I said: listen Mauve, you intended to come to Etten and were to initiate me more or less, in the mysteries of the palette, but I thought that would not be a matter of a few days, so I come to you, and if you agree I will stay four or six weeks, or more or less if you say so, and then we must see what we can do. It is very bold of me to ask so much from you, but you see, *j'ai l'épée dans les reins.* Then Mauve said: did you bring something with you? Yes, here are a few studies; and then he praised them a great deal too much, but at the same time he criticized, but too little. Well, and the next day we put up a still life and he began by telling me: this is the way to keep your palette. And since then I have made a few painted studies, and then afterwards, two water-colours.

So that is the result of the work, but to work with the hands and the brains is not everything in life.

I still felt chilled through and through, to the depths of my soul, by the before mentioned real or unreal church wall. And I did not want to be stunned by that feeling. Then I thought: I should like to see a woman, I cannot live without love, without a woman. I would not give a farthing for life, if there were not something infinite, something deep, something real. But then I said to myself; you said "she and no other," and you would go to another woman now, that is unreasonable, that is against all logic. And my answer to that was: who is the master, the logic or I, is the logic there for me or am I there for the logic, and is

there no reason and no sense in my unreasonableness and lack of sense? And whether I act right or wrong, I cannot do otherwise, that damned wall is too cold for me, I need a woman, I cannot, I may not, I will not live without love. I am but a man, and a man with passions, I must go to a woman, otherwise I freeze or turn to stone, or in short am stunned. But under the circumstances I had a great battle within myself, and in the battle there remained victorious some things which I knew of physic and hygienics, and had learned by bitter experience. One cannot with impunity live too long without a woman. And I do not think that what some people call God and others supreme being, and others nature, is unreasonable and without pity, and in one word I came to the conclusion: I must see whether I can find a woman.

And dear me I had not far to seek. I found a woman, not young, not beautiful, nothing remarkable if you like, but perhaps you are somewhat curious. She was rather tall and strongly built, she did not have ladies' hands like K., but the hands of one who works much, but she was not coarse or common, and had something very womanly about her. She reminded me of some curious figure by Chardin or Frère, or perhaps Jan Steen. Well, what the French call "une ouvrière." She had had many cares, one could see that, and life had been hard for her, oh, she was not distinguished, nothing extraordinary, nothing unusual. "Toute femme à tout âge, si elle aime et si elle est bonne, peut donner à l'homme non l'infini du moment, mais le moment de l'infini." Theo, to me there is such a wonderful charm in that slight fadedness, that something over which life has passed. Oh! she had a charm for me, I even saw in her something of Feyen Perrin or Perugino. You see I am not quite as innocent as a green-horn or as a baby in the cradle. It is not for the first time that I was unable to resist that feeling of affection, aye affection and love for those women, who are so damned and condemned and despised by the clergymen from the pulpit. I do not damn them or condemn them, neither do I despise them. I am almost thirty years old, would you think that I have never felt the need of love? K. is still older than I am, she also has had experience of love, but just for that reason I love her the better. She is not ignorant, but neither am I. If she wants to live only on that old love and refuses the new, that is her business, and if she continues that and evades me, I cannot smother all my energy and

all my strength of mind for her sake. No, I cannot do that. I love her, but I will not freeze for her sake or unnerve myself. And the stimulus, the spark of fire we want, that is love and not exactly spiritual love.

That woman has not cheated me,—oh he who regards all those women as cheats, how wrong he is, and how little understanding does he show. That woman has been very good to me, very good, very kind, in what way I shall not tell my brother Theo, because I suspect my brother Theo of having some such same experience.—So much the better for him. Have we spent much money together? No, for I did not have much, and I said to her: listen, you and I need not make ourselves drunk to feel something for each other, just put in your pocket what I can spare. And I wish I could have spared more, for she was worth it.

And we talked about everything, about her life, about her cares, about her misery, about her health, and with her I had a more interesting conversation than for instance with my very learned, professor-like cousin. Now I tell you these things, hoping that you will see that though I have some sentiment, I do not want to be sentimental in a silly way, that I want to keep some vitality, and to keep my mind clear and my health in good condition, in order to be able to work. In this way I understand my love for K., and for her sake I will not be melancholy now that I have started to work, and I will not let myself be upset. The clergymen call us sinners, conceived and born in sin, bah! what dreadful nonsense that is. Is it a *sin* to love, to need love, not to be able to live without love? I think a life without love a sinful condition and an immoral condition.

If I repent of anything it is of the time when I was induced by mystical and theological notions to lead too secluded a life. Gradually I have thought better of that. When you wake up in the morning and find yourself not alone, but see there in the morning twilight a fellow creature beside you, it makes the world look so much more friendly. Much more friendly than religious diaries and whitewashed church walls, with which the clergymen are in love. It was a modest simple little room where she lived, the plain paper on the wall gave it a quiet grey tone yet warm like a picture by Chardin; a wooden floor with a mat and a piece of old crimson carpet, an ordinary kitchen stove, a chest of drawers, and a large

simple bed, in short the interior of a real working woman. She had to stand at the wash-tub the next day. Just so, quite right. In a black petticoat and dark blue camisole she would have been as charming to me as she was now in a brown or reddish grey dress. And she was no longer young, was perhaps as old as K.— and she had a child, yes she had had some experience of life, and her youth was gone, gone?—"il n'y a point de vieille femme." Oh, and she was strong and healthy,—and yet not coarse or common. Those who care so very much for distinction, are they always able to discern what is really distinguished? Dear me, people seek it often in the clouds or under the ground, when it is quite close at hand sometimes, even I did so now and then.

I am glad I acted as I did, because I think there is no earthly reason to keep me from my work, or cause me to lose my good spirits. When I think of K. I still say, "she and no other," but those women who are condemned and damned by the clergymen, it is not only of late that I have a heart for them, that feeling is even older than my love for K. Often when I walked in the streets quite lonely and forlorn, half ill and in misery, without money in my pocket, I looked after them and envied the men that could go with them, and I felt as if those poor girls were my sisters, in circumstances and experience. And you see that is an old feeling of mine, and is deeply rooted. Even as a boy I often looked up with infinite sympathy, and even with respect into a half-faded woman's face, on which was written as it were: life in its reality has left its mark here.

But my love for K. is something quite new and quite different. Without realizing it she sits in a kind of prison. She too is poor and cannot do as she wishes, and she feels a sort of resignation, and I think that the Jesuitism of clergymen and pious ladies often make more impression on her than on me; they have no hold on me any longer, just because I have learned to know some of the tricks, but she believes in them and would not be able to bear it, if the system of resignation, and sin, and God, and heaven knows what else proved to be idle.

And she never realizes, I fear, that God perhaps really begins when we say the word with which Multatuli[1] finishes his Prayer of an Unbeliever: "O God there is no God." That God of the

[1] Famous Dutch author.

clergymen, he is for me as dead as a door-nail. But am I an atheist for all that? The clergymen consider me as such,—be it so—but I love, and how could I feel love if I did not live, and if others did not live, and then if we live there is something mysterious in that. Now call that God, or human nature or whatever you like, but there is something which I cannot define systematically, though it is very much alive and very real, and see that is God, or as good as God.

And dear me, I love K. for a thousand reasons, but just because I believe in life and reality, I do not become abstract as I used to be, when I had the same thoughts as K. seems to have now, about God and religion. I do not give her up, but that crisis of soul anguish in which she perhaps is now, must have its time, and I can have patience with it, and nothing that she may do or say makes me angry. But while she clings and holds to the old things, I must work and keep my mind clear for painting and drawing and business. So I have acted as I did, from need of vital warmth and for hygienic reasons I tell you these things also that you may not again think of me as being in a melancholy or abstract, brooding mood. On the contrary I am generally occupied with, and only thinking of paint, water-colours, finding a studio, etc. etc.

Boy, if I only could find a fitting studio!

Well, my letter has become very long.

I sometimes wish that the three months before I can go again to Mauve were up. But they too will bring me some good of their own! Write to me now and then, is there a chance of your coming here this winter? And be sure I will not take a studio without knowing what Mauve thinks of it, I agreed to send him the plan of the room, and perhaps he will then come and look at it himself. But father must not meddle with it, father is not a man to decide any artistic question. And the less father is mixed up in my affairs the better I can get on with him, but I must be free and independent in many things. That is but natural.

I sometimes shudder when I think of K., and see how she buries herself in the past, and clings to old dead ideas. There is a kind of fatality in it, and oh she would not be the worse, if she changed her opinions, I think it rather probable there will come some reaction, there is so much that is healthy and sound in her.—And so in March I shall go to the Hague again, and to Amsterdam

too. But when I left Amsterdam the last time I said to myself: by no means become melancholy or let yourself be stunned, so that the work suffers from it, just when it begins to progress. To eat strawberries in spring, yes it does happen in life, but it is only a short period of the year, and we are now far from it.

And so you envy me for some reason or other. Oh, boy, you must not, for what I am seeking can be found by everyone, even sooner by you than by me perhaps. And oh in so many things I am very backward and narrow-minded, if I only knew exactly where the fault was and how I must manage to better it, but alas we often do not see the beams in our own eye. Write to me soon, and in my letters you must separate the chaff from the grain, if there is some good in them, some truth, so much the better; but of course there is much in them that is not right, more or less exaggerated perhaps, without my being always conscious of it. Indeed I am not a learned man, I am so very ignorant, oh just like so many others, and even more than others, but I cannot fathom that myself, and much less can I fathom others, and I am often wrong. But in erring we sometimes find the right path, and il y a du bon en tout mouvement (à propos I accidentally heard Jules Breton say that, and remembered that saying of his). I say, did you ever hear Mauve preach? I heard him imitate several clergymen,—once he preached about the fishing bark of Peter (the sermon was divided into three parts, 1st had he received or inherited that bark, 2nd had he bought it on instalment or shares, 3rd had he—oh! terrible thought—stolen it?); then he preached on the good intentions of the Lord, and on the "Tigris and the Euphrates" and then he imitated Father Bernhard: God—God is Almighty—He has made the sea, He has made the earth, and the sky, and the stars, and the sun, and the moon; He can do everything—everything—everything—no, He is not almighty, there is one thing He cannot do. What is that thing the Almighty cannot do?

God Almighty cannot cast out a sinner. . . .

Well, adieu, Theo, write to me soon, a handshake in thought, and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

Dear Theo, [Undated.]

As father and mother write to you I enclose a word, but I hope soon to write you at length, that is, when Mauve has been here; he is expected one of these days at Prinsenhage and will also come here. You must know Theo that Mauve has sent me a painting box with paint, brushes, palette, palette knife, oil, turpentine, in short everything necessary. So it is now a settled thing that I shall begin to paint and I am glad things have come so far.

Well, I have been drawing a good deal of late, especially studies of the figure. If you saw them now, you would see in what direction I am going. Of course I am now longing to hear what Mauve will have to say. The other day I made some drawings of children, too, and liked it very much.

These are days of great beauty in tone and colour; when I have made some progress in painting I will succeed some day in expressing a little of that, but we must stick to the point, and now that I have begun the drawing of the figure I will continue it, until I am more advanced, and when I work in the open air it is to make studies of trees, viewing the trees like real figures. I mean especially with a view to the outline, the proportion and the construction, that is the first thing one has to consider. Then comes the modelling and the colour, and the surroundings, and it is about that question I need Mauve's advice.

But, Theo, I am so very happy with my painting box, and I think it better that I get it now, after having drawn almost exclusively for at least a year, than if I had started it immediately. I think you will agree with me in that.

Now in my last letter I forgot to tell you that I think it fine that you are to go to London. I should not like you to go and stay there, but it is a good thing to become acquainted with it.

In the long run I do not think you would like it there, at least to me it becomes clearer and clearer, that I never felt in my element there. Here in Holland I feel much more at home, aye I think I shall become again a thorough Dutchman, and don't you think that's the most reasonable after all? I think I shall again become a quite thorough Dutchman, in character as well as in my style of drawing and painting. But I think it will prove of use to me,

that I have been abroad some time, and have seen a few things there, which it is not superfluous to know. When you get to London I wish you would give my best regards to my old comrades, George Read and Richardson.

Mr. Obach I met this summer at the Hague.

George Read is if you like a very ordinary man, in so far as he is not superior either in business or in knowledge, but if one knows him somewhat intimately, as man and character, there is none more faithful, more kind, more sensitive than he. He is so humorous and so witty, and so smart in everyday things, that he is quite a valuable friend in that respect. If I might choose whom I should most like to see again, of all my acquaintances in England, it would certainly be George Read. Therefore if you would do me a favour, you must be sure to look him up, and tell him that I hope we will renew our former acquaintance, and that I will write to him some day.

But I will do so only after you have seen him and after I have started painting.

For, Theo, with painting my real career begins. Don't you think I am right in considering it so ?

And now adieu, a handshake in thought, and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

THE HAGUE

December 1881–September 1883

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Dear Theo, The Hague Thursday evening.

Thanks for your letter and the enclosed. I was again at Etten when I received it, as I told you I had arranged this with Mauve. But now you see I am back again at the Hague. On Christmas I had a violent scene with father and it went so far that father told me I had better leave the house. Well, he said it so decidedly that I actually left it the same day.

The real reason was that I did not go to church, and also said that if going to church was compulsory and if I was *forced* to go, I certainly should never go again out of consideration, as I had done rather regularly all the time I was in Etten. But oh, in truth there was much more back of it all, among other things the whole story of what happened this summer between K. and me.

I was in such a passion as I do not remember having ever been in my life, and I frankly said that I thought their whole system of religion horrible, and just because during a miserable time of my life I had gone too far into those questions, I did not want to think of them any more, and must beware of them as of something fatal.

Have I been *too* angry, *too* violent,—it may be—but even if that were so, it is settled now, once and for all.

I went back to Mauve and said: "listen Mauve, at Etten I cannot stay any longer and I must go and live somewhere else, by preference here." Well, Mauve said: "then stay." And so I have rented a studio here, that is a room and an alcove that can be arranged for that purpose, cheap enough, on the outskirts of the town, on the Schenkweg, ten minutes from Mauve. Father said if I wanted money, he would lend it to me if necessary, but that

is impossible now, I must be quite independent from father. How? I do not know as yet, but Mauve will help me if necessary, and I hope and believe you will too, and of course I will work and try as hard as I can to earn something.

I am in for it now, and the die is cast. In an inconvenient moment, but how can it be helped?

I must have some simple furniture and besides all my expenses for drawing and painting materials will increase.

I also must try to dress somewhat better.

It is a risky affair, a question of up or down. But some day I would have had to set up for myself, so what shall I say, it has happened sooner than I expected. As to the relation between father and me, that will not be redressed so very easily. The difference in our views and opinions is too great. It will be a hard pull for me, the tide rises high, almost to the lips and perhaps higher still, how can I know? But I will fight my battle, and sell my life dearly, and try to win and get the best of it.

The first of January I shall move into the new studio. As to furniture I will take the simplest, a wooden table and a few chairs. Instead of a bed I would be satisfied with a blanket on the floor. But Mauve wants me to get a bed, and will lend me the money if necessary.

You can imagine I have a great many cares and worries. But still it gives me a feeling of satisfaction that I have gone *so* far that I cannot go back again, and though the path may be a difficult one, I now see it clearly before me.

Of course I must ask you Theo, if you will send me now and then, what you can spare, without inconveniencing yourself. And send it to me rather than give it to others, for if it is possible we must not have Mauve mixed up in the financial affairs. It is already of such enormous value that he helps me with advice in matters of art. But he insists on my buying for instance a bed and a few pieces of furniture. He says: I will lend it you if necessary. And according to him I must dress somewhat better and not try to skimp too much.

I will soon write you more at length. *I will not consider it as a misfortune* that things have gone so, on the contrary, notwithstanding all kinds of emotions, I feel a certain calm. There is safety in the midst of danger. What would life be if we had no

courage to attempt anything. I have been walking around everywhere to find that studio, in town as well as in Scheveningen.

Scheveningen is terribly expensive. This studio costs only 7 guilders a month, but the furniture makes it so expensive. But once having a house of one's own it is a good possession and gives one a more solid footing. The light comes from the south, but the window is large and high, and I think the room will look very pleasant after some time. You can imagine that I feel quite animated. How will it be with my work a year hence? If I could only express what I feel. Well, Mauve understands all this, and he will give me as much technical advice as he can,—that which fills my head and my heart must be expressed in drawings or pictures.

Mauve himself is very busy with a large picture of a fishing-smack drawn up the dunes by horses. I think it delightful to be at the Hague and I find so many beautiful things here, I must try to express something of it.

Adieu, boy, a handshake in thought and write soon, believe me,

Yours,

Vincent

Kind regards from Mauve and Jet.

I have a little money left, but how long will it last? I must stay at the inn until the 1st of January. Address your letters, A. Mauve, Uileboomen 198. I go there almost every day.

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Dear brother, (January 1882.)

I just send you my best wishes for the new year. May it be a good year for you in every respect, and egotistically I add: for me too. Well, as for me it will perhaps please you to hear that I am installed in a studio of my own—a room with an alcove. The light is bright enough, for the window is large, twice as large as an ordinary window, but it is on the south.

The furniture I have taken is in the real "Constable style," as you call it; but I think mine is more so than yours, although you

have invented the word. (I have for instance, real kitchen chairs, and a real strong kitchen table.)

Mauve has lent me fr. 100, for rent and furniture, and to have the window and light adjusted. You can imagine that this is a load on my mind, but, well it was the only possible way, because in the long run it is much cheaper to have things of your own, than always to spend money for a so-called furnished room.

Well, I had a lot of trouble to get everything and before I could arrange the furniture so as to make it do.

But now, boy, I have a real studio of my own, and I am so glad.

I could not dare to hope that it would happen so soon, but now I am very glad, and I hope you also approve of it.

Listen, you know that my expenses will be more than in Etten, but I shall try to struggle along. Mauve gives me great hope that I shall soon begin to earn something. And now that I am in a studio of my own, this will not make an unfavourable impression on the persons who until now suspected me of amateurism, of idleness, of living on others. I hope you will be able to send me something these days. If I were greatly in need and asked Mauve, he would not refuse me, but I really think he has done enough now.

It happens to every man once in his life that he has to set up housekeeping, and though I at first greatly dreaded the feeling of being in debt, I feel after all it is better so.

We arranged that I shall work regularly from the model, it is the most expensive and yet the cheapest way in the end.

De Bock does not improve on further acquaintance, he rather lacks backbone, and he gets angry when one says some things which are only the a.b.c. He has some feeling for landscape, he knows how to put some charm in it (for instance in a large picture which he is making now), but one gets no hold on him. It is too vague, and thin,—*du coton filé trop fin.* His pictures are the shadow of an impression, and in my opinion that impression is hardly worth repeating so often.

I do not wish to associate much with other painters. Each day I find Mauve more clever and more trustworthy, and what more can I want! However, Theo, I shall have to dress a little better now. I know now the direction in which I have to go, and need

not hide myself, so I shall not avoid meeting other people,—neither shall I seek them. Mauve and Jet send you their compliments.

Adieu, I am still very busy, believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

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Dear brother, [Undated.]

Listen, Theo, what is the matter with you?

Did you not receive my last letter, in which I told you what happened at home, and how in consequence of that, I left the house and went back to the Hague, and am now settled in my own studio: address *Schenkweg* No. 138 (near Rynspoor station).

You know Mauve helped me to get settled, but I have still a great many expenses and for the last few days I really have not had a penny in my pocket. Of course I had counted positively on your sending me the fr. 100 at least for the month of January.

But up to now I have not received anything, not even a letter from you. The worst is that I cannot work with a model, until I have again some money in my pocket, so I can hardly do anything, as the weather is too bad to sit outside, though I tried it several times.

I am all right, but the last few days I am faint with suspense. I have been looking for models, and found a few, but I cannot take them.

In desperation I went to-day to Goupil's, for according to what you wrote to me I thought I would in Heaven's name ask Tersteeg to lend me something. But Tersteeg had just gone out of town for a few days.

Toward Mauve I must put a good face on the matter, Mauve has really done enough.

Tersteeg had promised to come and see me, but he has not been here as yet. If for some reason or other you cannot send the fr. 100 at once send me at least part by return mail.

I found a stamp in my pocket, otherwise I would not be able to send you this letter. It is a time of struggle for you and for

me, but I think we are making progress. So let us keep courage. Adieu, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

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(Letter from Theo to Vincent)

Dear Vincent, Paris January 5 1882.

I received your two letters, and thank you for keeping me informed as to how things are going. That you have settled at the Hague is quite right, and I hope to be able to help you as much as I can to get on until you can earn your own money, but what I cannot approve of is the manner in which you left father and mother. That you could not bear it there any longer is possible, and that you differ in opinion with people, who have lived all their lives in the country and have not come in touch with modern life, is not more than natural, but, confound it, what made you so childish and impudent, to embitter and spoil father's and mother's life in that way. It is not difficult to fight against one who is tired already. When father wrote to me about it, I thought it might be a misunderstanding, but you yourself say in your letter: it will not be so easily redressed. Don't you know him then, and don't you feel that father cannot live as long as there is a quarrel between you two? *Coûte que coûte you must* set the matter straight, and I am sure that some day you will deeply repent having been so heartless in this matter. For the present it is Mauve who attracts you, and as you exaggerate, everyone who is not like him is not to your taste, because you look for the same qualities in everybody. Is it not bitterly hard for father when he sees himself counted for nothing by somebody who calls himself more liberal, and whom he perhaps now and then envies for his clearer insight? Does not *his* life count for anything then? I do not understand you. Write me again when you can. My compliments to Mauve and Jet, ever

Yours,

Theo.

(Vincent returns the above letter, writing his reply on the same sheet.)

(January 7 1882.)

. . . . . .

Outwardly I put the matter straight by writing again to father, saying that I had rented a studio, that I sent my best wishes for the New Year, and that I hoped during the new year we would never quarrel again in that way or any other. More I cannot, more I need not do.

. . . . . .

You say: "I do not understand you." Well, I readily believe that, for writing is but a poor means of making things clear to each other. And it takes much time, and you and I are already busy enough. But we must have some patience until we see each other again, and have a good talk.

As to Mauve,—yes, certainly I am very fond of Mauve, and feel sympathy with him, I love his work,—and I call myself fortunate to be able to learn from him, but no more than Mauve himself can I confine myself within a system or theory, and besides Mauve and Mauve's work, I love others also, who work quite differently from him. And as to myself and my own work, perhaps there is some similarity, but there certainly is some difference too. When I like somebody or something I do it in all seriousness, and sometimes with passion and fire, but I do not systematically find only a few persons perfect and all the rest unworthy,—far from it.

You ask me: write again.—Yes of course, but first I must arrange with you in what manner I shall write.

Do you want me to write in a kind of business style, dry and correct and weighing and limiting my words, and in fact not saying anything, or do you want me to continue writing about everything as I have done lately, telling you the thoughts that come to my mind, without being afraid of letting myself go, without keeping back my thoughts or censoring them? The latter is what I should like best, that is to write freely saying exactly what I mean.

And now I finish my direct answer to your letter, for I have still to talk to you about drawing, etc., and that is what I like best.

It would have been much better if I had spent this winter at

Etten, and it would have been much easier for me, especially for financial reasons,—if I began to think and worry about that it would make me melancholy again, so in one word that is all over. Once I am here I must manage to get through, if I wrote father again about it, it would be putting oil on the fire, and I will not make myself so angry again, I throw myself heart and soul into my work here, and what shall I say, Etten is lost and the Heike, *but I shall try to gain something in its place.* Now I thank you heartily for what you sent me. I need not tell you that in spite of it I am still very hard up. Of course my expenses are more than in Etten, and I cannot work half as energetically as I should like, and would be able to if I had more money at my disposal.

But my studio begins to look well now. I wish you could see it some time, I have hung all my studies on the wall and I want you to send me back those you have, for they may be of service to me. They may be unsaleable and I readily acknowledge all their defects, but there is something of nature in them, because they have been made with a certain passion.

And you know I am now trying hard to make water-colours, and if they turn out well they will be saleable.

But, Theo, I can assure you that when I went for the first time to Mauve with my pen drawing and Mauve said: you must try it now with charcoal and chalk and brush and stump, I had a deuced lot of trouble to work with that new material. I have been patient and it did not seem to help, then at times I became so impatient that I stamped on the charcoal and was utterly discouraged. And yet after some time I sent you a drawing made in chalk and charcoal and with the brush, and I came back to Mauve with a whole lot of them, in which he of course found something to criticise and with reason, as you did too, but still I had made a step forward.

Now I am again in such a period of struggle and discouragement, of patience and impatience, of hope and desolation. But I must struggle on, and after a time I shall know more about the making of water-colours. If it were so easy there would be no fun in it. And with painting it is the same.

Another bad thing is the weather is very unfavourable, so life is not so very easy for me this winter. Still I enjoy it, and especially the fact that I have a studio of my own is inexpressibly delightful.

When will you come to have lunch with me, or tea? I hope soon. You can even stay over night, that will be fine, and you will be quite comfortable. And I have some flowers too, a few pots with bulbs. And besides that I have got another decoration for my studio, I have bought very cheaply some beautiful woodcuts from the *Graphic*, in part prints not from the cliché but from the blocks themselves.

Just the thing that I have been wanting for years, drawings by Herkomer, Frank Holl, Walker, and others. I bought them from Blok, the Jewish book dealer, and from an enormous pile of *Graphics* and *London News* I choose for fr. 5 the best. There are things among them that are superb, for instance "The Houseless and Homeless" by Fildes (poor people waiting before a night asylum), and two large Herkomer's, and many small ones, and "The Irish Emigrants," by Frank Holl, and "The Old Gate" by Walker, and especially "A Girls' School" by Frank Holl, and another large Herkomer "The Invalids."

Well, that is just the stuff I want.

And I keep those beautiful things with a certain tranquillity, because lad, though I am still far from making perfect drawings myself, yet I have a few studies of old peasants, hanging on the wall, that prove how my enthusiasm for those artists is not vain, but that I struggle and strive to make something myself that is realistic and yet done with sentiment. I have about twelve figures of diggers and men who are working in a potato field, and I wonder if I could not make something of it, you have still a few, for instance a man who fills a bag with potatoes. Well, I do not know for sure, but sooner or later I shall accomplish that, for I looked at it so attentively this summer, and here in the dunes I could made a good study of the earth and the sky, and then boldly put in the figures. But still I do not attach too much importance to these studies, and hope of course to make them quite different and better still, but the Brabant types are characteristic, and who knows if I cannot get some profit from them. If there are some you want to keep, I shall be glad to have you do so, but those which you do not want I should like to have back. By studying new models I shall be able to find out the mistakes of proportion in my studies of this summer, and so perhaps these will still be of some use to me. When your letter was so long in coming (for as it went first to Mauve, I

received it still later) I had to go to Mr. Tersteeg and he has given me fr. 25 until I should receive your letter. It would perhaps be well if with our mutual consent an arrangement were made with Mr. Tersteeg. For you understand, Theo, I must know for certain what I can expect and I must reckon and count beforehand, and must know if I can do this or that, or if I cannot do so. So you will greatly oblige me by making some definite arrangement and I hope you will soon write me about it.

Mauve has promised me that he will at once propose my name for a special membership of Pulchri, because then I can draw there twice a week in the evening after the model, and have more intercourse with painters. Later on I will become as soon as possible a regular member.

Well, boy, thanks for what you sent me, and believe me with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

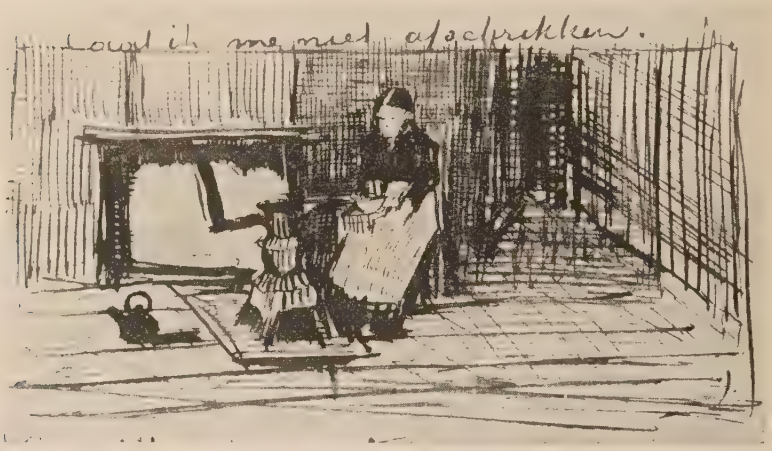
170

Dear brother, [Undated.]

In my last letter I gave you, as I have done before, a short and concise answer to some things, but for all that you must not think that I am always in a freezing unfriendly mood, which Mauve would perhaps call a green-soap or salt-water mood. Well, and even if I had written a green-soap or salt-water letter, that would not be worse than if I had taken it too sentimentally.

You say: "you will deeply repent it some day"—my dear boy, I think I have done much of that repenting before this. I saw it coming and tried to avoid it; well I did not succeed, and bygones are bygones. Shall I repent still more, no, I really have no time for repenting. Drawing becomes more and more a passion with me and it is a passion just like that of a sailor for the sea. Mauve has now shown me a new way to make something, that is, how to paint water-colours. Well, I am quite absorbed in this now and sit daubing and washing out again, in short *I am* trying to find the way. "Puisqu'il faut faire des efforts de perdu. Puisque l'exécution d'une aquarelle a quelque chose de diabolique. Puisqu'il y a du bon en tout mouvement énergique."

So though I intended to write you more explicitly about what happened at home and to try to explain things as they seem to me, though I wanted to speak to you about some other subjects too, I have no time for it now, and I think it better to write you again about drawing. I started at once a few smaller water-colours and also a large one, at least almost as large as one of those figure studies, which I made at Etten. Now of course that does not succeed at once. Mauve himself says that I shall at least spoil about ten drawings, before I shall know how to handle the brush well. But back of it is a better future, so I work with as much composure as I can collect, and am not disheartened even by my mistakes.



This is a little sketch of one of the smaller water-colours, it is a corner of my studio with a little girl who is grinding coffee.

You see I am seeking for tone, a head or a little hand that has light and life in it, and that stands out against the drowsy dusk of the background, and then boldly against it that part of the chimney and stove—iron and stone—and a wooden floor. If I could get the drawing as I want it, I would make three-fourths of it in a green-soap style, and only the corner where the little girl sits I would treat tenderly, softly and with sentiment.

But you understand I cannot express everything as I feel it, but the question is to attack the difficulties, and the green-soap

part is not yet green-soapy enough, and, on the other hand, the tenderness is not tender enough.

But at any rate I have hammered the sketch on the paper, and the idea is expressed, and I think it a good one.

Of course one cannot master the technique in one day.

This is the subject of the large drawing, but I made it in a hurry and the sketch is horrible.

They tell me somebody has been to see me to-day, I think Mr. Tersteeg. I hope so, for he has promised to come and I should like to talk with him about a few things.

He said he would come back to-morrow morning.

Theo, I have great trouble with the models, I hunt for them and when I find them it is hard to get them to come to the studio,

and often they do not come at all. For instance this morning a blacksmith's boy could not come because his father wanted me to pay a guilder an hour, of course I refused to do that.

To-morrow that old woman will sit for me again, but for three days she could not come. When I go out I often make sketches in the soup kitchens or in the third class waiting-room, and such places. But outside it is so deuced cold, especially for such as I who do not draw as quickly as the more advanced; and who must finish my sketches more in detail if they are to be of any use.

So you see that I do not sit idle, and for the present I think no more about Etten, but try to get rooted here. Of course the models cost a lot of money and I must tell you that for myself I also spend what is necessary, though living as cheaply as possible. (I take my

meals in the soup kitchen). Yet I hope you will not object to my going on.

But I repeat what I have already said in my last letter, let me know as nearly as possible what I can expect, and I wish you could make some arrangement with Mr. Tersteeg so that in case of difficulties I can go to him without any scruples. For my part I promise you to work as hard as I can, but with models for instance it often depends on the money I have or have not in my pocket, whether I can work *full speed, half speed, or not at all.* So now I am making arrangements with a mother and her baby, but I am afraid it will be too expensive. Of course you understand that I like best to go full speed, but . . . well, you know what I mean. I must rein myself in until I have rather more scope and freedom.

Write to me soon, and do send me the money for February as early as possible, for I am quite sure I shall not have a cent left by that time. Meanwhile I intend to go on making those little pen drawings, but in another way than that large one of this summer. Somewhat more crude, and more austere. This is a little sketch of the Schenkweg, the view from my window.

Well, adieu with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

171

Dear Theo, [Undated.]

Now that another week has passed I write to you again.

I have had a model regularly, every day from morning until evening, and the model is good.

Mauve has come to see me and Mr. Tersteeg also, and I am very glad of that. Now I have been working all the time in water-colour, and I grow to like it more and more.

How I wish you were here, I have so many things to ask and to tell you. Do you think you will come in spring? Will you know it some time in advance ?

What I have made now is far from good, but it is different and has more power and freshness and is without body-colour.

Now, I hope you will write me soon, and especially that we shall try to make some arrangement about the money. For though fr. 100 a month would be sufficient for my own expenses, it is quite a different matter when I have to pay models daily and must feed them, etc. etc. And then the expenses of paint, paper, etc. I told you in my last letter that it depends on my income whether I can work full speed or half speed.

Now that I am settled here, small expenses spring up afresh every day which do not make life easy for me at all. However, I have worked on regularly for some time, but now I am without a cent.

It is but natural that when one settles somewhere, there are all kinds of expenses.

But in spite of this I am making progress and I shall learn to

make water-colours, and then it will not be so very long before my work becomes saleable.

Mr. Tersteeg himself said something about it, and when some of those smaller ones turn out well, he will probably buy some. And I have completed still further the drawing of the little old woman of which I sent you a sketch, and some day it will surely sell.

Believe me, I work, I drudge, I grind all day long and I do so with pleasure, but I should get very much discouraged if I could not go on working as hard or even harder.

If you write Mr. Tersteeg about it, he will certainly credit you for an amount which you fix yourself, and he can control the spending of it if he does not trust me. But it would be terrible if I could not go on working in the same way as I have done these last three weeks. As to the size of the drawings or the subjects, I will readily listen to the suggestions of Mr. Tersteeg and Mauve. I undertook some large ones lately because I wanted by all means to get rid of the dryness in my studies of last summer. And now Mauve said to me last night, though of course he found some things to criticise, "it begins to look like a water-colour." Well if I gain that much I reckon to have wasted neither time nor money. And now that I have tried the use of the brush and the strength of the colours on a larger size, I can again risk some smaller ones, but as I did not get on with them and partly washed them out again I started a very large one, of which I send you a sketch.

So, I have work enough for the week that begins to-morrow, but I am afraid I have not money enough, for fr. 2.50 and a few cents is all I have left. What must I do now; if I go to Mauve or Mr. Tersteeg and ask them, I do not think they would refuse me. But Mauve has already done so much, and to Mr. Tersteeg I would rather sell a few small drawings than borrow money from him. So answer me soon, and if you can do something, send me some money so that I can work on. I feel, Theo, that there is a power within me, and I do what I can to bring it out and free it. It is hard enough, all the worry and bother with my drawings, and if I had too many other cares and could not pay the models I should lose my head. It is bad enough that you have to pay for everything, but things are not so bad as they were last winter. I feel that I am on a nearer road to success. I shall do what I can,

I shall work hard, and as soon as I have more power over my brush, I will work still harder than I do now. And if we push on energetically now, the time will not be far off when you need not send me money any more.

Well, boy, do what you can, and I shall also do what I can. Adieu. I count on your writing soon, you need not send so much at a time, if I can only go on from week to week.

Receive a handshake in thought,

Yours,

Vincent

172

Sunday evening Schenkweg 138

Dear Theo, (near the Ryn station).

It is true I wrote you only yesterday, but I thought I would write you again. For though I still have a dose of courage left, it is sometimes very hard always to put on a good face before Mauve and Tersteeg and others. Yet I must do so, for though I do not pretend to them to be care-free, I need not tell them all the details and particulars. But it happens often enough that I am quite at a loss what to do. Now this morning I felt so miserable that I went to bed, I had a headache, and was feverish from worry, because I dread this week so much, and do not know how to get through it. And then I got up, but went back to bed again, and now I feel a bit better, but I wanted you to know that I did not exaggerate in my letter of yesterday. If I only continue working hard it will not be long before I earn something with my work, but until then I am greatly harassed by my scarcity of funds. I also have relatively still so few drawing materials or else defective ones. For the present it is sufficient, I have my painting box and easel and brushes, but, for instance, this week my drawing-board warped like a barrel because it was too thin, and my easel also got damaged in the delivery, which is bad enough. Well, there are a lot of things which I still want or must improve, and of course all that need not be done at once, but it is the cause of daily small expenses which taken altogether worry me a great deal. Sometimes my clothes need repairing, and Mauve already has given me a few hints about

that too, which I shall certainly carry out, but it cannot be done all at once. You know my clothes are chiefly old things of yours, that have been altered for me, or a few are bought ready-made and are of poor material. So they look shabby, and especially with all that dabbling in paint it is still more difficult to keep them decent; with boots it is the same. My underwear also begins to wear to shreds. You know that it is already a long time that I have been without means, and then many things get dilapidated. And then it sometimes happens that one becomes involuntarily terribly depressed, be it only for a moment, often just in the midst of feeling cheerful as I really am even now. So it was this morning; these are evil hours when one feels quite helpless and faint with over exertion. I think it really was because I had arranged with Mauve about things I would do with a model out of doors, and then I thought all at once: perhaps I cannot do so because in two days I shall not have a cent left, and then Mauve will think that I was afraid to do it. So I got up again to write you once more, because I felt so anxious. And it hinders me so much in my work, when I have to think about too many other things against my will, and while I am in front of my model I do not know how I shall pay him, and whether I shall be able to go on next day or not. And I must, I must be calm and quiet in order to work, it is difficult enough anyhow. And especially now I must keep up, but I felt so clearly this morning that my strength was failing me, not my ardour or my courage, and therefore I tell it you once more.

I can quite well imagine you have also your difficulties, but I think some arrangement might be made with Tersteeg, which would settle everything.

Now that I can work at Pulchri with a model two evenings a week, perhaps if necessary four days with the model would be enough, and now that I have found that old woman, it need not be so expensive as it was at first, when I had a new one every day.

For I have had already several models, but they are either too expensive or they think it too far to come here, or they make objections afterwards and do not come back. But I think in this old woman I have hit on the right one.

Yesterday I had a lesson from Mauve on the drawing of hands and faces to keep the colour transparent. Mauve knows things so thoroughly, and when he tells you something, he exerts himself

and says it not only for the sake of saying something well and I exert myself to listen attentively and to put it in practice. I told Mauve again yesterday that it was so necessary for me to earn something, but I will not ask him for money, for he gives me something that is much better than money, and besides he has already helped me with my furniture, and that is more than enough. Now that I have written to you I will set to work again to-morrow in good confidence. When you were in Etten this summer you spoke about my working in water-colours. Then I did not know how to start it even. Now the light begins to dawn and notwithstanding all, the sun is rising.

Well adieu, Theo, receive a handshake in thought and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

173

Dear Theo, Schenkweg 138 Thursday.

I received your letter with the enclosed fr. 100, and thank you very much for both. What I had already feared when I wrote to you last has really happened, meaning that I have not been well, and I have been in bed for almost three days with fever and nervousness. Accompanied by headache and toothache now and then. That is a miserable condition and comes from over-exertion. Mauve has been again to see me and we once more agreed to keep up courage through all.

But I am so angry with myself now because I cannot do what I should like to do, and at such a moment one feels as if one were lying bound hand and foot at the bottom of a deep dark well, utterly helpless. Now I am better, in so far that I got up again yesterday evening and rummaged around straightening things, and when this morning the model came of her own accord, though I only half expected her, I arranged how to pose her with Mauve and tried to draw a little, but I could not do it, and the whole evening I felt miserable and weak. But if I rest a few more days it will be over and I need not be afraid that it will come back soon if I am careful.

I am very sorry to hear that you do not feel well either. When was in Brussels last winter, I also took a bath as often as I could

at the bathing establishment, two or three times a week, and as it did me a lot of good I will do it here also. I doubt not if you keep it up for some time it will help you a great deal, because it keeps the blood in good circulation, and keeps the pores of the skin open, so that it can fulfil its function, and otherwise it would shrivel up, especially in winter. And I tell you frankly that my opinion is that one must not hesitate at going to a woman now and then, if there is one you can trust and feel something for, as there really are many.

For one who has a strenuous life it is necessary, absolutely necessary in order to keep sane and well.

One must not exaggerate such things and fall into excesses, but nature has fixed laws against which it is fatal to struggle.

Well you know yourself all that is necessary on that subject.

It would be well for you, it would be well for me if we were married, but what can we do?

I send you a little drawing, but you must not conclude that they are all like that, this has been washed in quickly and thinly, but with the larger ones this does not always succeed, aye it does but seldom.

It will perhaps show you that it is not a hopeless affair and that I have learned the knack of making them.

When Mauve was here last time he asked me again if I needed money. I was then able to say I did not want it, but you see in case of need he would be willing to do something. And so though there will be some difficulties now and then, I hope we can manage to struggle through. Especially if Mr. Tersteeg would be so kind as to give me some credit, in case of your being unable to send me money, and when it is absolutely necessary.

You speak of *fair promises*, with me it is more or less the same case. Mauve says, it will be all right, but for all that the water-colours I make are not quite saleable. Now I have some hope myself and I will work hard on them, but it is often desperate enough, when I try to finish them it becomes too heavy. That is exasperating, for it is no small difficulty. And the experiments with water-colours are rather expensive—paper, paint, brushes, model, and time, and what not.

But still I think the most economical way is to keep going without losing time.

For this bad time *must* be lived through.

I must try and forget some things that I taught myself, and learn to look at things in quite a different way.

It takes a lot of trouble before one has a steady eye on the proportion of things.

It is not always easy for me to get on with Mauve or vice versa, because I think we are equally nervous, and it costs him a real effort to show me things and me not less to understand it, and to try to put it in practice.

But I think we are both beginning to understand each other better and it becomes a somewhat deeper feeling than superficial sympathy. He is very busy with his large picture, that was intended at one time for the Salon, it is a splendid thing. And he is also busy with a winter landscape. And some fine drawings.

I think he gives in each picture and in each drawing some small part of his life. He is at times tired to death, and lately he said: "I do not seem to get any stronger," and whoever had seen him at that moment would not soon forget the expression of his face.

When my drawings become heavy, thick, muddy, black and dull Mauve says, to comfort me: "if your work were transparent *now* it would only possess a certain chic, and it would probably become heavy later on. Now you are pegging away at it and it becomes heavy, but afterwards it will go quickly and become light." If that is true I have no objection to it. And you can see it now from the little one I am sending you, it was started and finished in a quarter of an hour, but only after I had made a larger one that became too heavy. And just because I had worked so hard on that large one, when the model accidently took the pose again, I was able to sketch in this little one on a bit of paper that was left from a sheet of Whatman. This model is a beautiful girl, she is the model of Artz[1] and many others, but she wants fr. 1.50 a day, and that is too expensive for me just now. So I try to manage with my little old woman.

I think the success or failure of a drawing depends also greatly upon the mood and condition of the painter. Therefore I try to do what I can to keep cheerful and clear-headed. But sometimes as now a heavy depression overcomes me and then it is damnation.

[1] Well-known Dutch painter.

The only thing to do then is to go on with the work; for Mauve and Israels and so many others, who are examples to the rest of us, they know how to profit from every mood.

Well I have some hope that as soon as I am quite well again, things will go better than they do now. If I have to rest for some time I will do so, but probably it will soon be over. Taken all together I do not feel so strong as a few years ago, then it never happened that I had to stay in bed a day, and now there is something that ails me every minute, although nothing serious.

Well, my youth is gone, not my love of life or my energy, but I mean the time when one feels so light-hearted and care-free. I really say: so much the better, there are now much better things after all. Keep heart, boy, I think it rather mean and cheap of Messrs. Goupil & Co. to refuse you when you wanted to raise some money. You have certainly not deserved their being so stingy towards you, for you have taken many chestnuts from the fire for them, and do not spare yourself. So you deserve that they treat you with some consideration.

A hand-shake in thought, I hope soon to have some better news to tell you than I have had lately, but you must forgive me, I feel very bad. Adieu.

Yours,

Vincent.

174

Dear Theo, February 13 1882.

Though I have been expecting a letter from you every day, I write to you once more.

I heard some news of you from Mr. Tersteeg, when he came back from Paris. He told me that you were all right, and he seemed quite satisfied with his trip. When I went to see him I took a few drawings with me and he said they were better than the others and he told me to make again some small ones. And I am busy with them now.

And I also made a new pen drawing of an old woman who sits knitting. And I think this one is better than that of last summer,

at least it has more tone. When I have finished a few pen drawings that are well done, I think I know a purchaser for them.

A few days ago I also wrote C. M. to tell him that I have taken a studio here, and that I hoped he would let me know whenever he came to the Hague and that he would come and see me. Uncle Cent also told me this summer that whenever I had finished a drawing somewhat smaller than those of this summer, and more of a water-colour I must send it to him and he would buy it. Perhaps the time really is not far off when I shall earn some money with my work, which I need greatly, for no other reason than to go on working seriously.

You must tell me if you can find out what kind of drawings the magazines would take. I think they could use pen drawings of types from the people, and I should like so much to make something that is fit for reproduction ; I do not think that all the drawings are made directly on the blocks, there must be some means of getting a facsimile on the block.

But I do not know exactly what process is used. Sometimes I long so much to see you and have a talk with you. Will it be long before you can come to Holland? I think that father rather expected you on his birthday.

I was very glad that Mr. Tersteeg found the drawings somewhat better, well I begin to get more used to my model, and for that very reason I must continue with her. In the last two studies I grasped the character much better, everyone who saw them told me so.

Lately I go out to draw sometimes with Breitner, a young painter who is acquainted with Rochussen, as I am with Mauve. He draws very well, and in quite a different style from me, and we often make sketches together in the soup kitchen or in the waiting-room, etc. Now and then he comes to my studio to see woodcuts and I go to see him also. He has the studio that Apol used to have at Siebenhaar's.

Last week I went to a small exhibition at Pulchri, where I saw sketches by Bosboom and Henkes. Very fine; Henkes had much larger figures than one usually sees from him. He ought to do more of them I think. Weissenbruch has also been to see me.

Every day I am looking for a letter from you, for I hope that you will send me some money soon.

We must keep on and continue, brother, you as well as I, and some day we shall reap the fruit of it.

I am so glad I have worked on the figure until now. If I had made landscape only, yes then I should now probably make something that would sell at a small price, but then afterwards I would be stranded. The figure takes more time and is more complicated, but I think it is more worth while in the long run.

This afternoon de Bock came to see me. Just when I was working with my model, and when he saw her, he said, he would also like to draw from the figure, but with all that he does not do so. But he made a very beautiful drawing lately.

In your last letter you told me something about the question of your not being able to raise money before the inventory was made. But if you cannot get the money, then be so kind as to write at once to Mr. Tersteeg about it, for I have only fr. 3 left and it is already about the middle of February.

So at all events I expect a letter from you one of these days.

I think that in my last drawings the proportions are much better than before, and that has been the worst fault in my drawings up to now; thank God that is changing and then I do not fear anything.

Adieu, Theo, write soon, a handshake in thought,

Yours,

Vincent.

175

Dear Theo, [Undated.]

This morning when I wrote to you I was still in doubt about something that worried me exceedingly, but about which I am now at ease for a time. I must tell you some bad news, which is that Mauve is far from well,—of course the usual thing,—

But also some good news, I have the assurance that it is only due to his illness that he has treated me so very unkindly of late, and that it was not because he thought my work went wrong.

I have already told you in a former letter, that I had a visit from Weissenbruch. Weissenbruch is for the present the only one allowed to see Mauve, and I thought I would go and speak

to him. So I went to-day to his studio, the attic you know too. As soon as he saw me he began to laugh and said: "I am sure you come to speak about Mauve," so that he knew at once why I came, and I did not have to explain.

He then told me that the reason for his visit to me really was that Mauve, who was in doubt about me had sent Weissenbruch to hear his opinion about my work.

And Weissenbruch then told Mauve: he draws confoundedly well, I could work from his studies myself.

And he added: "they call me 'the merciless sword,' and so I am, and I would not have said so to Mauve if I had found no good in your studies." Now as long as Mauve is ill or too busy with his large picture I may go to Weissenbruch if I want to find out anything, and Weissenbruch told me that I need not worry about the change in Mauve's attitude towards me. Then I asked Weissenbruch what he thought of my pen drawings. "These are the best," he said. Then I told him that Tersteeg had scolded me about them.

"Do not mind it," he said, "when Mauve said you were a born painter, Tersteeg said no, and Mauve then took your part against Tersteeg, and I was present, and if it happens again I will take your part also, now that I have seen your work." I do not care so much about that "taking my part," but I must say that sometimes I cannot bear it when Tersteeg always and always says to me, "you must begin to think about earning your own living." I think it is such a dreadful expression, and then all I can do is to keep calm. I work as hard as I can and do not spare myself, so I deserve my bread, and they ought not to reproach me for not being able until now to sell anything.

I tell you these details because I do not understand why you have neither written to me nor sent me anything this month.

Is it possible that you have heard something from Tersteeg that has influenced you?

I can assure you once more that I work hard to make progress in things that would be easy to sell that is: water-colours, but that cannot succeed at once. If I succeed in making them by and by, it would even then be rather soon, considering the short time I have been working. But I cannot succeed right away. As soon as Mauve is better and comes to see me again or I go to him he will

give me some useful hints in reference to the studies, which I am making meanwhile. Lately Mauve has done very little for me, and once he said so himself: I am not always in a mood to show you things, sometimes I am too tired and then you must for goodness' sake await a better moment.

I think it a great privilege to visit now and then such clever people as Weissenbruch, especially when they take the trouble, as for instance Weissenbruch did this morning, to show me a drawing they are working on, but which is not yet completed, and explain how they are going to finish it. That is what I want. Whenever you have an opportunity to see anyone paint or draw, observe it well, for I think many an art dealer would judge differently many pictures if he knew how they were made. It is true one can understand it somehow by instinct, but this much I know, that I got a clearer insight into many things by having seen artists at work, and by trying some things myself.

I should like to have some more of that Ingres paper some day, perhaps it will soon be good weather to work out of doors, and then it will be of great use to me. I am getting more chary of my studies and should like to get back those you have.

Adieu, dear fellow, a handshake in thought; poor Mauve, he will not be better before his large picture is finished, and after that he will be exhausted.

Yours,

Vincent.

176

Dear Theo, [Undated.]

It is now the 18th of February and I have not heard anything from you this month. I thought you might perhaps be ill, because in your last latter you mentioned not feeling well. But Mr. Tersteeg told me that you were better, at least he was not aware of your being ill. You can imagine that I am very hard pressed for money. Mr. Tersteeg has bought a small drawing from me for fr. 10, and with that I managed this week. But he wants them small and only in water-colour, and I do not always succeed in that. But at least one sheep has passed the bridge. I work all I can, but do not

forget that I shall break down, if I have too many cares and anxieties.

So write by next mail, if you can send me some money, and beileve me, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

This week I made three other studies besides the one Mr. Tersteeg bought, the technique is not yet perfect, but, thank God, the drawing is better.

I am very glad that I feel my drawing is improving, it gives me courage. Drawing is the principal thing, whatever they may say, and it is the most difficult too.

It is for that reason that I dare say I shall make something saleable within a year. For the one Mr. Tersteeg bought does not count, I shall make them much better when I have made more progress in drawing, as then it will come easier to me.

Adieu, boy, do write soon!

177

Dear Theo, Saturday.

I received your last letter with enclosed fr. 100 in good order, and thank you heartily for sending it.

I would have acknowledged it at once but I was very busy with a few drawings, for which I had a model.

For you must well know that if you are busy, it is the same case with me and will be more and more so, because my work becomes more absorbing to me, and it is only with an effort that I tear myself away from it, to write a letter or call on some one when it is necessary.

I was very glad that you wrote you would come soon to Holland. When you have seen what I have been doing lately, we shall perhaps get a clearer understanding of the future. When you come I hope we shall spend some quiet time in the studio, and I also hope you will let me know beforehand, so that I can arrange with my model, and not have her during the days of your visit. You write to me about father's birthday; I must tell you that I am so glad to be free from it all, it gives me such a rest, which I

need so much for my work, my head cannot hold more than it does and I dread so much to begin a new correspondence, that for the present I leave things as they are.

When I think of Etten it gives me the shudders, as if I were in church. Well, *qu'y faire*, and once more *qu'y faire?*

A propos you must not take it amiss, Theo, or think that I am finding fault with you, but you have written me something which you thought would perhaps please me, but it did not please me at all.

You said that small water-colour was the best of mine that you had seen,—well that is not so, because the studies of mine which you have are much better, and the pen drawings of this summer are better also, for that little drawing is of no importance whatever, I only sent it to you to show that it is not impossible that I may work in water-colour some time. But in those other things there is much more serious study and more character, though they may look rather green-soapy. And if I had anything against Mr. Tersteeg (but I have nothing against him) it would be that same thing, which is, that he encourages me, not in difficult study from the model but rather in a style of work that really is only half fit to render what I want to express, according to my own character and my own temperament.

Of course I should be very happy to sell a drawing, but I am happier still when a real artist like Weissenbruch says about an unsaleable??? study or drawing: "that is true to nature, I could work from that myself." Although money is of great value to me, especially now, the principal thing for me remains to make something serious.

Well, the same thing that Weissenbruch said about a landscape, a field of turf, Mauve said about a figure, and an old peasant who sits brooding on the hearth, as if he saw things from the past rising in the blaze of the fire or in the smoke.

It may last a longer or a shorter time, but the surest way is: to penetrate deep into nature.

"Il reste à être vrai," Gavarni says. One may be for some time in pecuniary difficulties, one gets over that, and the drawings that were refused at first, are then sold. Now I have written to C. M. to tell him that I have taken a studio here, and he wrote back that he will come soon to the Hague, and will then come to see me. The

other day I received greetings from my old friend Wisselingh from London, he promised to come also, and he was glad that I was at work. Well, I hope you will succeed in getting a holiday, for I long very much to see you. I think when you will have seen the studies of these last weeks you will quite approve of my taking models regularly.

Of course I can draw the models better, when I have learned to know them well. And I have had rather good luck in finding them.

To-day while I am writing to you I have a child, who has to rest for half an hour, and that half-hour I use for this letter.

Once more thanks for what you sent me and a handshake in thought. Adieu.

Yours,

Vincent.

P.S. I have made two more studies of the child to-day, it is getting dark now. Good night.

178

Dear Theo, Friday March 3.

Since I received your letter and the money, I have had a model every day, and I am head over ears in my work.

It is a new model I have now, though I had drawn her superficially once before. Or rather it is more than one model, for from the same family I have already had three persons, a woman of 45, like a figure by Eduard Frère, then her daughter of about 30 years, and a younger child of 10 or 12. They are poor people and I must say they are more than willing. I get them to pose, but not without difficulty, and only on condition that I promise them regular work. Well, that was exactly what I wanted so much myself, and I think it a good arrangement.

The younger woman is not handsome, as she is marked by smallpox, but the figure is very graceful and has some charm for me. They have also the right clothes. Black merino and a nice style of bonnets and a beautiful shawl, etc. You need not feel too uneasy about the money, for I made some arrangement with them in the beginning. I promised them a guilder a day as soon as I shall sell something.

And also that I shall make up to them later because I pay too little now. But I must try to get some one to buy my drawings.

If I could afford it, I would keep everything I make now for myself, for if I kept them for only a year, I think I could then get more for them. Well, but as things are now I should be very glad if Mr. Tersteeg would buy something now and then if only on condition of exchange in case he did not sell them.

Mr. Tersteeg has promised to come and see me as soon as he can find time. The reason why I should like to keep them is simply this. When I draw separate figures it is always with a view to a composition of more figures, for instance a third class waiting-room, a pawn shop, or an interior. But these larger compositions must ripen slowly, and for a drawing of for instance three seamstresses one must draw at least ninety seamstresses. *Voilà l'affaire.*

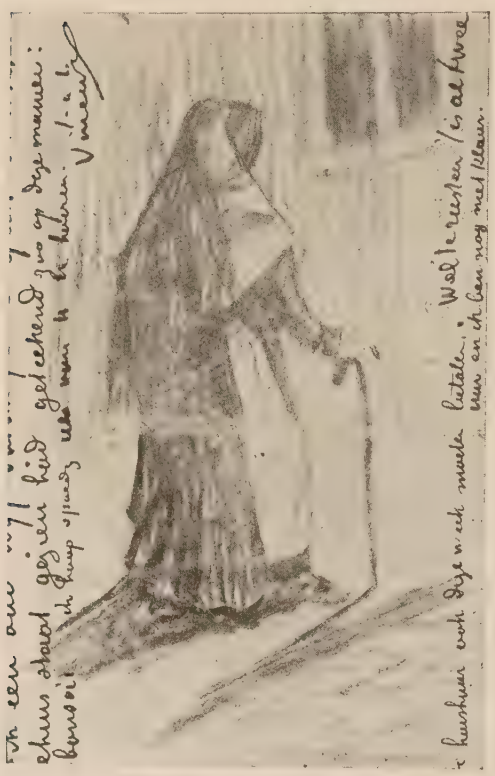
I had a kind note from C. M. with a promise that he will soon come to the Hague and then come to see me. Well, it is nothing but a promise, but perhaps it will come to something. Enfin.

For the rest, I will run after people less and less, whoever they may be, neither dealers nor painters, the only people I will run after are models, for to work without a model, I think for me at least decidedly wrong. Say, Theo, it is pleasant after all when some light begins to dawn, and I do see some light now. It is a wonderful thing to draw a human being, something that lives, it is confoundedly difficult, but after all it is splendid.

To-morrow I have a children's party, two children that I must amuse and draw at the same time. I want some life in my studio, and have all kinds of acquaintances in the neighbourhood. Next Sunday I will have a boy from the Orphanage, a splendid type, but alas I can only have him a short time. It is perhaps true that I cannot get on very well with people who are very conventional, but, on the other hand, I can perhaps get on better with poor or so-called common people, and though I lose on one side,—I gain on the other, and I let things go and say to myself: after all it is right and just, that as an artist I live in the sphere I understand and want to express, " honi soit qui mal y pense."

It is now again the beginning of the month, though it is not as yet a full month since you have sent me money, I would ask you to kindly send me some more as soon as possible.

It need not be all the fr. 100 at once, but just enough for me to continue until you can send the rest. I say this because you said in a former letter that you could only raise money when the inventory was taken. It strikes me to the heart when I think the model will have to wait for her money, because they need it badly. Until now I have paid them regularly, but next week I would not be able to do so, but I can get the model anyhow, either the old woman, the younger one, or the child. A propos Breitner spoke about you lately, that there was something he was sorry for, and which he thought you would be angry about. He has a drawing that belongs to you, I think, but I did not understand exactly what it was all about. He is busy with a large picture, a market full of figures. Yesterday evening I was out with him to look for types of the people in the streets, so as to study them afterwards at home with a model.



In that way I made a drawing like the above of an old woman, I saw on the Geest, where the insane asylum is.

Well, good night, I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,

Vincent.

I also had to pay the rent this week. Good night, it is already two o'clock and I have still some work to do.

179

Dear Theo, [Undated.]

In your letter of the 18th of February you said: "When Tersteeg was here, we of course spoke about you and he told me that whenever you wanted anything you could always go to him."

But why is it then that when I asked Tersteeg some days ago for fr. 10 he gave them to me, but accompanied by so many reproaches, I might almost say insults, that I could hardly control myself, though I did so. I would have thrown the fr. 10 in his face if the money had been for myself, but I had to pay the model, a poor sick woman, whom I may not keep waiting. So I kept quiet. But for six months I will not go to Tersteeg again, or speak to him or show him my work.

I do not say that to him, but I say it to you.

Dear Theo, you may say: "you must remain on good terms with Tersteeg, he is almost like an elder brother to us." But my dear fellow, he may be kind to you, but to me for years he has only shown his unfriendly and harsh side.

He would have the right to reproach me if I did not work, but it is unjust to someone who toils patiently, hard, and continuously on a difficult work, to make reproaches like this:

"Of one thing I am sure, you are no artist."

"One great objection for me is that you started too late."

"You must earn your own living."

Then I say: "Stop, be careful what you say."

One cannot always be friends, one must quarrel sometimes. As to the arrangement between you and me about receiving money from you, when you come to the Hague, which I hope will be soon, I want to speak about that with you in Mauve's presence and with nobody else. Mauve's large picture will soon be finished, and then I suppose Mauve will again give me some hints about water-colours.

The substance of what Mauve has said up to now is: "Vincent, when you draw, you are a painter."

And therefore I have worked, and worked hard on drawing, on proportion, on perspective, for weeks and weeks, and Tersteeg does not appreciate this enough and talks only about "things that don't sell."

I do not deserve his reproaches but I will be calm, because I certainly respect him, therefore I say: after six months we will speak to each other again, for six months we will not see each other.

Send me soon the money for this month if you can. I make progress with my work, but without or with too little money I cannot work.

With a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

I would rather go without dinner for six months and save in that way, than to receive now and then fr. 10 from Tersteeg accompanied by his reproaches.

I should like to know what the painters would say of his argument: "to work less from the model because it is cheaper," when after a long search one has found models that are not too expensive.

To work without a model is the ruin of a painter of the figure.

180

Dear Theo, [Undated.]

Perhaps you will find rather harsh what I wrote you about Tersteeg. But I cannot take it back. It must be told him straight out or else it does not penetrate through his harness. He has considered me for years as a kind of dreamer, and duffer, he still considers me so, and even says about my drawing: "that is a kind of narcotic which you take in order not to feel the pain it costs you not to be able to make water-colours."

Well, that is very fine spun, but the saying is thoughtless, superficial and not to the point, the principal reason for my not being able to make water-colours is, that I must draw still more seriously, paying more attention to proportion and perspective.

Enough of that, I do not deserve his reproaches and if my draw-

ings do not amuse him, neither does it then amuse me to show them to him.

He condemns my drawings, which have a great deal of good in them, and I did not expect this from him.

If I make serious studies after the model, that is much more practical than his practical talks about what is saleable or unsaleable, about which I do not need so much instruction as he supposes, having been in the business of selling pictures and drawings myself.

So I would rather lose his friendship than give in to him in this matter.

Though there are moments when I feel overwhelmed by care, still I am calm, and my calmness is founded on my serious method of work, and on earnest reflection. Though I have moments of passion aggravated by my temperament, yet I am calm, as he who has been acquainted with me so long knows quite well. Even now he said to me: "you have too much patience."

That word is not right, in art one cannot have *too much* patience, that word is out of proportion. Perhaps Mr. Tersteeg has in my case *too little* patience.

He must see now, once and for all, that I take things seriously and will not let myself be forced to produce work that does not show my own character. Especially in my last drawings and studies, which Tersteeg condemned, my own character begins to show.

Perhaps, perhaps I could succeed even now in making a water-colour that would sell if one tried very hard.

That would be forcing water-colours in a hothouse. Tersteeg and you must wait for the natural season, and that has not arrived yet.

He spoke English when he was here because of the model. I said to him: In due time you shall have your water-colours, now you cannot,—they are not due as yet,—take your time. And that is all I have to say. Enough of it.

Since Tersteeg's visit I made a drawing of a boy from the Orphanage, who is blacking shoes. It may be this is done by a hand that does not quite obey my will, but still the type of the boy is there. And though my hand may be unruly, that hand will learn to do what my head wishes. So I have made a sketch of the studio with the stove, the chimney, easel, footstool, table, etc., of

course not quite saleable at present, but very useful for practising perspective.

I am longing for your visit, there are so many things for you to see that I have made since you were here last summer. Theo, I count on your judging my work with sympathy and with confidence, and not with hesitation and dissatisfaction.

Because I work so much, Tersteeg thinks it is so easy, therein he is also quite wrong.

For in fact I am a drudge or a draught ox.

When you come, do not forget the Ingres paper. It is especially the *thick* kind that I like to use and which I think also must be good for studies in water-colour. Believe me, in things of art the saying is true: honesty is the best policy, rather more trouble on a serious study than a kind of chic to flatter the public. Sometimes in moments of worry I have longed for some of that chic, but thinking it over I say: No,—let me be true to myself,—and in a rough manner express severe, rough, but true things. I shall not run after the amateurs or dealers, let who likes come to me. In due time we shall reap, if we faint not!

Well, I say Theo, what a big man Millet was.

I borrowed from de Bock the great work by Sensier, it interests me so much that it wakes me up in the night and I light the lamp and sit up to read. For in the day time I must work.

Do send me some money soon, if possible. I wish Tersteeg had to live for a week on what I have to spend, and had to do what I have to do, he would then see that it is not a question of dreaming and brooding, or taking narcotics, but that one must be wideawake to fight against so many difficulties. Neither is it easy to find models and to get them to sit for me. This discourages most painters. Especially when one must save on food, drink, and clothes to pay them.

Well, Tersteeg is Tersteeg, and I am I.

But I must tell you that I am not opposed or hostile to him, but I must make him understand that he judges me too superficially, and—and I believe that he will change his opinion,—I fervently hope so, for it grieves and worries me, when there is an unfriendly feeling between us. I hope your letter will come soon,—I spent my last penny for a stamp for this letter. It is true I received only a few days ago the fr. 10 from Tersteeg, but that same day I had to

pay fr. 6 of it to the model, to the baker, to the little girl that sweeps the studio.

Adieu, I wish you health and good courage, notwithstanding all I myself am not without good courage.

"Je te serre la main,"

Vincent.

I have had a very pleasant visit from Jules Bakhuyzen[1] and I may go to see him whenever I like.

(Postscript.)

Theo, it is almost miraculous!!!

First comes your registered letter, secondly C. M. asks me to make for him 12 small pen drawings, views from the Hague, à propos of some that were ready. (The Paddemoes,—de Geest,—de Vleersteeg, were finished.) At fr. 2.50 a piece, price fixed by me, with the promise that if they suit him, he will take 12 more at his own price, which will be higher than mine. In the third place I just met Mauve, happily delivered of his large picture, and he promised to come and see me soon. So, "ça va, ça marche, ça ira encore!"

And another thing struck me—very very deeply,—I had told the model not to come to-day,—I did not say why, but nevertheless the poor woman came and I protested. "Yes, but I do not come to pose, I just came to see if you had something for dinner," —she had brought me a dish of beans and potatoes. There are things that make life worth living after all. The following words in Sensier's "Millet" appealed to me, and touched me very much, sayings by Millet:

"L'art c'est un combat—dans l'art il faut y mettre sa peau."

"Il s'agit de travailler comme plusieurs nègres: *J'aimerais mieux ne rien dire que de m'exprimer faiblement.*"

It was only yesterday that I read that last saying by Millet, but I had felt the same thing before, that is why I sometimes like to scratch what I want to express, with a hard carpenter's pencil or a pen, instead of with a soft brush. Take care, Tersteeg, take care, you are decidedly in the wrong.

[1] A Dutch painter.

1881[1]

Dear Theo,

You will have received my letters, I now answer yours that came this afternoon. According to your wish I immediately sent to Tersteeg the fr. 10 I had borrowed from him this week.

I wrote to you about C. M.'s order, it happened in this way: C. M. seemed to have spoken with Tersteeg before he came to see me, at least he began to say the same things about "earning my bread." My reply came on the spur of the moment, quick, and I believe correctly this was what I said: "Earn bread, how do you mean that? Earn bread, or deserve bread,—not to deserve one's bread, that is to say to be unworthy of it, that certainly is a crime, for every honest man is worthy of his bread,—but unluckily not being able to earn it, though deserving it, that is a misfortune, and a great misfortune." So if you say to me: "you are unworthy of your bread," you insult me, but if you make the rather just remark that I do not earn it always, for sometimes I have none, well that may be so, but what is the use of making the remark, it does not get me any further, if you say no more than that."

So then C. M. spoke no more about that "earning bread."

However, the thunder threatened once more, for when by chance I mentioned the name of de Groux, in speaking about expression, C. M. said abruptly: "but do you know that in private life de Groux has no good reputation?" You can imagine C.M. touched there a delicate point, and ventured on a slippery road. I could not stand there and hear that said of the brave father de Groux. So I replied: "it has always seemed to me that when an artist shows his work to the public, he has the right to keep to himself the inward struggle of his own private life (which is directly and fatally connected with the peculiar difficulties involved in producing a work of art) unless he wants to confide them to a very intimate friend. I repeat, it is very improper for a critic to dig up a man's private life, when his work is above reproach. De Groux is a master like Millet, like Gavarni."

[1] From this point instead of one here and there, many of the letters are undated. Vincent, at this time, in the impetuosity of his feelings and under the influence of the consuming fire of art which burnt within him, seems as if he cannot be troubled by such a petty detail as dating his letters.

These letters, however, are carefully arranged by the editor in their order as written. Even though it is at times impossible to trace the precise day of the week in which they were composed.

C. M. had certainly never considered Gavarni a master. (To any other but C. M. I would have expressed myself more briefly and strongly by saying: the work of an artist and his private life are like a woman in childbirth and her baby. You may look at her child, but you may not lift her chemise to see if it is blood-stained. That would be very indelicate at the time of your visit.)

I began already to be afraid that C. M. would be angry, but luckily things took a better turn. For a change I got out my portfolio with smaller studies and sketches. At first he did not say anything, until we came to a little drawing that I once sketched, at twelve o'clock at night while strolling around with Breitner, the Paddemoes (that Jewish quarter near the new church) as seen from the Peat Market. Next morning I had worked on it again with my pen.

Jules Bakhuyzen had also looked at the little thing and immediately recognized the spot.

"Could you make some more of these views of the city?" asked C. M. "Yes, I make them for a change, sometimes when I am tired from working with the model,—there is the Vleersteeg, —the Geest,—the Fish Market." "Then make twelve for me." "Yes, said I, but this is business, so we must set a price at once. I have fixed the price for a small drawing of this size, either in pencil or pen, at fr. 2.50,—do you think that unreasonable?"

"No,—" he says, "but when they turn out well, I will ask you to make 12 of Amsterdam, but then I shall fix the price myself, so that you will get a little more for them."

Well, I think that no bad result of a visit, which I dreaded more or less. Because we agreed, Theo, that I should tell you things spontaneously in my own way, I describe to you those little scenes just as they happen. The more so because in that way, though you are absent, you get a glimpse in my studio.

I long very much for your coming, because then I can speak more seriously with you, for instance about what happened at home.

C. M.'s order is like a ray of hope for me.

I will do my best on these little drawings and try to put some character into them. At all events you will see them, and I think, boy, that there is more of that kind of business to be done. One can find purchasers for small drawings at fr. 5. With some practice I can make one every day. And look here, if they turn

out well they procure me a crust of bread, and a guilder for the model every day. Summertime with the long days is approaching, I make my "soup ticket," that means the bread and model drawing, either in the morning or in the evening, and in the daytime I study seriously after the model. C. M. is one purchaser whom I found myself, perhaps you will succeed in finding a second, and perhaps Tersteeg, when he has got over his fit of reproaches, may find a third, and then business is started.

To-morrow morning I will go out to find a subject for the drawings of C. M. This evening I was at Pulchri. Tableaux and a kind of farce by Tony Offermans. I did not stay for the farce, because I do not like them and I cannot stand the close air of a crowded hall, but I wanted to see the tableaux, especially because there was one after an etching, which I had given to Mauve: "The Stable at Bethlehem," by Nicholas Maes (the other was Rembrandt's, "Isaac blessing Jacob," with a splendid Rebecca looking on to see if her trick will succeed). The Nicholas Maes was very good in tone and colour, but the expression was not worth anything. The expression was decidedly wrong. Once I saw that in reality, not of course the birth of Christ, but the birth of a calf. And I remember exactly how the expression was. There was a little girl in the stable that night,—in the Borinage,—a little brown peasant girl with a white nightcap, she had tears of compassion in her eyes for the poor cow, when the poor thing was in throes and had great trouble. It was pure, holy, wonderful, beautiful, like a Correggio, a Millet, an Israëls.—Oh, Theo, why do you not give up the whole thing and become a painter, boy, you can if you will, I sometimes suspect you of concealing a famous landscape painter within yourself. *Entre nous soit dit*, I think you would draw birch trees wonderfully, and the furrows in the field, and paint snow and the sky, etc. With a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

I say, Theo, would you not consider the idea that there is a famous landscape painter hidden in you. We must become painters both of us, *court et bon*, we will earn our crust anyhow. For drawing the figure one must be more or less of a drudge or a

beast of burden, more *homme de peine*. There's a long, long thought for you,—old boy.[1]

Theo, do not become materialistic like Tersteeg. The question is, Theo my brother, not to let yourself be bound by whatever it may be, especially not by a golden chain.

Quoiqu'il en soit, to be an artist is sounder; the money difficulty especially is very bad, but I repeat, you as a landscape painter would overcome it sooner than I, though I shall surely overcome it also some time. But if you once start you will still overtake me, for figure drawing is more complicated, advances more slowly.

You understand I speak in full earnest.

Here follows a list of Dutch pictures intended for the Salon.

Israël's, an old man (if he were not a fisherman it might be Thomas Carlyle, the author of the *French Revolution* and Oliver Cromwell, for he has decidedly the characteristic head of Carlyle) is sitting in a corner near the hearth, on which a small piece of peat is faintly glowing in the twilight. For it is a dark little cottage where that old man sits, an old cottage with a small white curtained window. His dog, that has grown old with him, sits beside his chair,—those two old friends look at each other, they look in each other's eyes, the dog and man. And meanwhile the old man takes his tobacco pouch from his pocket and he lights his pipe, in the twilight, that is all—the twilight, the silence, the loneliness of those two old friends, the man and the dog, the understanding between those two, the meditation of the old man, —what he is thinking of, I do not know, I cannot tell, but it must be a deep, a long thought, something, but I do not know what, it comes rising from a past long ago, perhaps that thought gives the expression to his face, an expression melancholy, contented, submissive, something that reminds one of Longfellow's famous poem with the refrain: But the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.

I should like to see this picture by Israëls hanging beside "Death and the Woodcutter," by Millet. I certainly do not know a single picture except this Israëls that is the equal of Millet's, "Death and the Woodcutter," or is worthy of being shown with it. And then

[1] "And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."
"Lost Youth," LONGFELLOW.

I feel in my mind an irresistible longing to bring these two pictures together, so they can complete each other. I think what is wanting in this Israëls is Millet's "Death and the Woodcutter" hanging near it, one at one end, the other at the other end of a long narrow gallery,—with no other pictures in that gallery but these two, and they alone. It is a famous Israëls, I really could not see anything else, I was so struck by it.

And yet there was another Israëls, a small one, with five or six figures, I think, a peasant family at meal time.

There is a Mauve, the large picture of the fishing-smack, that is drawn up on the dunes; it is a masterpiece.

I never heard a good sermon on resignation nor can I imagine a good one, except that picture by Mauve, and the work of Millet.

That is *the* resignation, but the real kind, not that of the clergymen. Those nags, those poor, ill-treated old nags, black, white and brown; they are standing there patient, submissive, willing, resigned and quiet. They still have to draw up the heavy boat the last bit of the way, the job is almost finished. Stop a moment. They are panting, they are covered with sweat, but they do not murmur, they do not protest, they do not complain, not about anything. They got over that long ago, years and years ago. They are resigned to live and work somewhat longer, but if tomorrow they have to go to the skinner, well be it so, they are ready. I find such a famous, deep, practical, silent philosophy in this picture, it seems to say,—"savoir souffrir sans se plaindre, ça c'est la seule chose pratique, c'est là la grande science, la leçon à apprendre, la solution du problème de la vie." I think this picture by Mauve would be one of the rare pictures before which Millet would remain standing a long time and mutter to himself: "il a du cœur ce peintre-là."

There were some more pictures,—I must tell you that I hardly looked at them,—these two were enough for me.

Dear Theo,

I thought afterwards that perhaps it might seem strange to you to find in my last letter an expression about a question I had never mentioned to you before, and even an expression in rather a decided tone, something like: "Theo, throw the whole thing to the dogs and become a painter. There is a famous landscape painter hidden in you." It may be that word escaped me in a moment, when my passions were aroused. But for all that, it is with this as with many other things, which sometimes escape me when I am in a passion or have been excited in some other way. Namely that I now and then say things which I have kept to myself for a long time and express in a somewhat roughway. But though in a calmer mood I should say it in milder terms or keep it to myself, it is a fact that especially in a calm mood such is decidedly my opinion.

It has been said now, so there is an end to it, I have said it at last in spite of myself, involuntarily in rough words, but now you know my intimate thoughts. And when I wrote: do not become materialistic like Tersteeg, and when I gave as my opinion that I did not have such a very high idea of art dealers in general, indeed these are things which I might have kept to myself, but now that I have broken my silence and have spoken, yes then I speak in that way.

As to Tersteeg, I have known him in a very peculiar period of his life, when he had just "worked himself up" as the term is, and besides was newly married. Then he made a very strong impression upon me,—he was a practical man, extremely clever and cheerful, energetic in small and great things, besides there was real poetry, of the true unsentimental kind, in him.

Then I felt such a respect for him, that I always kept at a distance and considered him a being of a higher order than myself. Since—since—since then I have begun to doubt,—more and more,—but I never had the courage to prod him with the scalpel of analysis. But now in a moment when I must be very much on my guard, and may not spoil my career for whoever it may be, now the above-mentioned scalpel has not spared him. And while I was sitting in his little office or spoke to him in the gallery with a very commonplace expression on my face, and asked him a few ordinary questions, I was taking his measure all the time as coolly as possible.

I used to think that he was somebody who gave himself the

air of a business man or man of the world,—I cannot express it in one word, I think you will guess my meaning,—and who hid much feeling and a warm heart behind that iron mask.

But I found his armour to be enormously thick, so thick that I cannot say for sure whether the man is of massive metal, either steel or silver, or whether there is still deep, quite deep, in that iron a small corner, where a human heart is beating. If there is no heart in him then really my affection for him entirely disappears and in its place comes: "qu'est-ce que tu me fais toi? Tu m'agaces!"

So that after six months or a year he will be either a total stranger to me or, or perhaps I will find a way to get on better with his worship. Meanwhile,—he is still his worship. One does not think in those terms of a person for whom one feels warm sympathy. His worship expresses something hackneyed.

Enough,—*Suffit*——

Theo, I am decidedly not a landscape painter, when I shall make landscapes *there will always be something of the figure in them.*

But I think it is quite right that there are also people who are essentially landscape painters. And it greatly preoccupies me that you might be such a person,—without knowing it, and I am just as much preoccupied by the reverse, that is, Theo, are you indeed essentially a dealer? If I had to prove the theorem perhaps I would turn it around and explain it negatively.

However it may be, think it over, I need not tell you to think well before you begin to paint, but perhaps you will not take it amiss when I say: Theo, until now you were free to do as you please, but if you ever make an arrangement with Messrs. Goupil & Co. should you promise to stay all your life with their firm, you would be a free man no longer.

And it seems to me quite possible that a moment may arrive in one's life when one will regret having thus bound himself.

You will undoubtedly say: the moment may arrive when one will regret that one became a painter. Those who regret are they who in the beginning neglect solid study, and who hurry and hasten to get on top. Well, the men of the day are the men of *one* day, but he who has so much faith and love that he takes pleasure in what others find dull, that is, the study of anatomy, perspective and proportion, he survives and ripens slowly but surely. When in a moment of great money difficulty I forgot myself and thought: I

will try to make something that has a certain aspect, the result was deplorable, I could not do that, and Mauve had reason to be angry with me and said: that is not the way, tear up those things. At first that sounded too harsh to me, but afterwards I cut them to pieces myself. But then when I began to draw more seriously, Tersteeg made remarks and became angry and overlooked the good points in my drawings, and asked straightway for "saleable" ones. Well, you see at once by this that there is a difference between Mauve and Tersteeg. Mauve becomes more and more serious the more one thinks of him, but can Tersteeg stand that test. I hope so, but I doubt whether he can stand it like Mauve.

And how is it with those who are serious at heart; though they may often seem disagreeable, one gets to like them and begins to feel at home with them, but of those who are not serious enough one soon gets tired.

You must not think that I have overlooked the fact of the change in financial circumstances which would result from a change in your career. But what makes me speak to you about this question is, that though I am in the midst of financial difficulties I feel there is nothing more solid than a "handicraft," in the literal sense of working with your hands. If you became a painter, one of the things that would astonish you is that painting and everything connected with it, is really hard work from a physical point of view; besides the mental stress, the worry of mind, it requires a rather great exertion of strength, and that day by day.

Well, for to-day I will not speak any more about it, I only say this much: whenever you come to Holland I would like to speak with you alone, not for half an hour but for a whole morning, about practical things that I have learned, either from my own practice or from Mauve and others, just as if I had to explain it to you, to teach you. I hope you will not object to this,—at the worst you will be bored that morning, but perhaps you will not be bored. I only hope that you will not think meanwhile of the "selling" of pictures, but of the "how to do it." Well, we shall see.

If you can send me some money towards the end of this month it will be very welcome. About that time I hope also to have finished the 12 drawings for C. M. If he pays for them at once that will bring me fr. 30 in my pocket, if you add something to it, I could risk buying a few shirts and drawers which I badly need, as the

shirts, etc., that I have are in a wretched state, and I have but few of them. Since I wrote to you I have always worked with the same models, and I can tell you I am glad I found them. I am busy drawing heads now, I must also draw hands and feet, that is very urgent, but I cannot do everything at once.

And when summer comes and the cold no longer prevents it, I must some way or other make some studies of the nude. Not exactly academical poses. But I should like for instance so very very much to have a nude model for a digger or a seamstress. Seen from the front, back and side. For learning to feel and see the body through the clothes, and to understand the action, I reckon that about a dozen studies, 6 of men and 6 of women would help me a great deal. Every study costs a day's work, but the difficulty is also to find the models for that end, and if I can avoid it I will avoid taking a nude model in the studio, so as not to frighten away other models.

The fear that they will have to "sit naked" for you is generally the first scruple you have to get rid of, asking someone to pose. At least that has been my experience more than once, even with a very old man, who probably would have been very Ribera-like as a nude model. But after all I do not seek for Ribera and still less Salvator Rosa, I do not see things in that way. I am even not enthusiastic about Decamps, I do not feel at ease before their pictures, and cannot try to fathom them without a feeling of missing and losing something. I rather prefer Goya or Gavarni, though both say "Nada." As final word??

I think "Nada" means exactly the same as the word of Solomon —"vanity of vanities, all is but vanity," but I cannot admit that without a nightmare. Well, it is too late now for more philosophy, as I must get up to-morrow morning at half-past five, because the carpenter comes to do a job before he goes to his work.

So good night and believe that I mean it very seriously when I speak about your becoming a painter. Adieu.

Yours,

Vincent.

I have made two more little drawings for C. M., a part of the Scheveningen road; and sand-diggers in the dunes.

As I have returned the money to Tersteeg, I am afraid when

the landlord comes toward the end of March, I will not have much left to give him. Therefore I hope if you can spare something you will send it towards the end of March.

Theo, Sunday I went to see de Bock again, I do not know why, but every time I go to see him I get the same feeling, that fellow is too weak, he will never succeed unless he changes, unless—unless—there is something spiritless, blasé, and insincere in him that oppresses me, there is a consumptive atmosphere in his house.

But—it does not strike the eye, and among his friends there are few who think of him as I do.

Well! but nevertheless he makes good things sometimes, at least things not without charm and grace, but is that enough?

The requirements are so great that painting seems at present like a military campaign, like a battle or war.

183

Theo, Friday morning.

I have been working very hard lately and I am busy from morning till night. First, the little drawings for C. M. They are finished, and I have sent them to him, but I had hoped he would pay me at once, and since he has not, I am afraid he will forget it and when will he send it now??? I continue to make such little views of the city almost every day, and I have the knack of it now.

I wish Tersteeg or others who pretend to be friendly or to want to help me, would ask me for things that *I can make*, instead of asking impossible things, that discourage instead of encourage me. Enfin que soit. But I had expected that C. M. would pay me at once. The drawings were certainly not less good than the specimen which he saw, and I had trouble enough to make them, perhaps more than fr. 30 worth. If people understood that *nothing is nothing*, and that days without a penny in my pocket are very hard and difficult, I think they would not begrudge me the little money I receive from you, that keeps me afloat in these hard times, or unnerve me by reproaches for receiving it from you.

If I work hard, do I not then deserve my bread? Or am I not worthy of the means which enable me to work? I only wish, brother, you would soon come here and see for yourself, whether I am cheating you or not.

Blommers spoke to me about showing some evening at Pulchri a collection of woodcuts after Herkomer, Frank Holl, Du Maurier, etc. I should like very much to do so. I have enough of them for at least two evenings.

Well, I am getting on all right and I feel that I am making progress. I must go on drawing for a year or at least a few months more until my hand has become quite firm and my eye steady, and then I do not see any obstacle to my becoming quite productive in things that will sell. It is but just, that I want these few months' time. I cannot go on quicker than that, for I should produce bad work, and that is not necessary, with a little patience I can give good work.

Can you send me some money soon? I hope so. You know I sent back the fr. 10 to Tersteeg.

I wish you would become a painter, you can if you wish and you would not lose by it, you would only become something better than if you remained an art dealer, even if you were the best of all art dealers.

But to bring out the best that is in you, you will have to plunge into it with all your strength.

I have not sent you any little sketches lately, I wait until you come to see them for yourself, that is better. I am busy drawing some figures and also a few landscapes, for instance a nursery here on the Schenkweg.

I should like to know since when they can force or try to force an artist to change either his technique or his point of view. I think it very impertinent to attempt such a thing, especially for a man like Tersteeg, who pretends to stand "on good form." Theo, if you can send me some money do so, and the sooner you send it, the sooner I am relieved of my worry.

Well,—I have to work anyhow—adieu, write soon,

Yours,

Vincent.

184

Dear Theo,

Several times I have sat down to write to you, but I could not bring myself to finish the letter. The reason was that I wanted

to write about several things, which had made me think the necessity of your becoming a painter so very evident.

But what I had written did not please me, and I could not find words strong enough.

Your objections are true, but in opposition there are many other things that counterbalance them. By thirty you would have made such progress that people would have to acknowledge you as a painter and value your work. And at thirty you will still be young.

What you have learned at Goupil's, your knowledge of many things, will just enable you to overtake many "who started early." For those early beginners often have a period of remaining sterile for years on the same level, and someone who begins energetically later on, need not go through that period.

Painting is a profession in which one can earn a living just as well as a blacksmith or a physician. An artist is at all events the downright opposite of a man who lives on his income, and I repeat, if one wants to make a comparison, there is more similarity between an artist and either a blacksmith or a physician. I quite well remember, now that you write about it, that when you spoke at the time of my becoming a painter, I thought it very unpractical, and would not hear of it.

What made me cease to doubt was my reading a clear book on perspective, Cassagne's Guide to the A B C of Drawing, and a week after I drew the interior of a kitchen with stove, chair, table and window, in their place and on their legs, while before it had seemed to me witchcraft or pure chance to get depth and the right perspective in a drawing. If you had only drawn one thing right, you would feel an irresistible longing to draw a thousand other things.

But one sheep has to pass the bridge, to get the others over. If a painter seized you by the arm and said: look, Theo, you must draw that field so, the lines of the furrows go this way, for such and such reasons and no other, they are brought into perspective this way. And that pollard-willow being *so* tall, that other one higher up is *so* small, and that difference in size you can measure in this way, and look, when you hammer that on the paper those principal lines are correct, and you have solid foundation under your feet on which to work. Such a conversation, provided he can put

his theory to the proof, would be much more practical in my case than many talks either on abstract or financial things. I will not continue that train of thought much longer, but you are just at the point of getting some day an insight into the practice, and if you happen to draw something correctly, in one word, if you learn to see the perspective of things then you are through with art-dealing, and then you feel like Correggio; I too am a painter; and then you see at the same time that you are in your element, and then,—then you are younger and more hopeful than ever before, then begins the second youth, which is better than the first, for, thank God, that second one does not pass away,—does not pass away like the first. For my first youth is gone and it will soon be gone for you.

As to Cor's education or mother's support, the money for these two things will not be wanting, even when you become a painter.

And as to yourself, your food, drink, sleep, your studio, your model . . . they are not far off,—if the thought of painting should be roused in you, you would see that it can be done.

But in order that you may not suspect me of overlooking the financial end I should like to say,—though with all respect for your present position as a dealer,—unless one has a real handicraft and can make something with one's own hands, I doubt the solidity of the position. For instance, I think the social position of Jaap Maris more sound and independent than that of Tersteeg. I have great respect for thought and intelligence, where these are wanting, one will be ruined notwithstanding one's handicraft, because one cannot make a firm stand and defend one's own work as is proved by Thys Maris. But people who possess thought and intelligence, and of course I count you among them, and should like to count myself also among them, are the best fitted for handicraft.

I resume. If you take up painting you will succeed, and in about your 30th year you will have a good position as a painter, any way no less than the one you have now. You will certainly not be a mediocrity in the bad sense of the word, if you begin to paint.

Now, I see a chance of making my money do if you can arrange to send about the middle of this month another fr. 100, that will last me until the beginning of May. Of the fr. 100 you just sent

me, I have not been able to pay Tersteeg, I have so many expenses, and I could not put off any longer paying for instance the house rent or buying a pair of trousers.

If you send again about the middle of April I *can* then return it to him (and will do so if you insist upon it). But I would rather make a drawing for it some time. That must not be the way with me, I must not pay cash to *dealers*, my debt to you is a different case. We do not know how things will go. If you remain an art dealer, you will get drawings and pictures for it in time, if you become a painter, I will pay you back the money and interest in the bargain.

As to the money for Tersteeg, when I first arrived here, he and Mauve were so kind and said, I need not worry, but in less than one month they suddenly changed and spoke quite differently, thinking perhaps that I would give up.

At first it grieved me, and then afterwards it left me rather cool and I thought: I will try not to mind it.

Breitner is in the hospital, I visit him now and then, to bring him either books or drawing materials. C. M. has paid me, and given a new order, but a very difficult one, 6 special detailed views of the town. However, I will try to make them, for if I understand it right, I will get as much for these 6 as for the first 12. And afterwards perhaps he will still want some sketches of Amsterdam.

Blommers came to see me about the exhibition of the woodcuts. He looked at them for three hours and was angry at the committee of Pulchri for saying something about, " those things one sees now and then in the South Holland café." If that is all they know about woodcuts, they are competent indeed to judge them! However, Pulchri had made objections. But Blommers wanted to have his way, and has asked me to keep them ready for next Saturday. It is very curious to hear some painters talk about what they call illustrators, about Gavarni for instance or Herkomer. *Not* knowing anything about the question is what forms a part of their so-called "*general information.*" Much good may it do them. With a handshake

Yours,

Vincent.

My thanks for the package of splendid Ingres paper and for the studies. Some day when people begin to say that I can draw a little but not paint, I will perhaps suddenly come out with a picture at a moment when they least expect it. But as long as it looks as if I were *obliged* to do so, and as if *I must not* do something else, I certainly will not do it.

There are two ways of considering painting: how not to do it, and how to do it, *how to do it* with much drawing and little colour.

How not to do it, with much colour and little drawing.

185

Dear Theo, April '82.

You must not wonder at my writing urging you to become a painter.

Because I myself am just now in a period where my former drudgery has become more of a pleasure.

For every week I now make something, which I could not make before, and, as I have already mentioned, it is like becoming young again. And it is the consciousness that nothing,—unless illness, can take from me the force that now begins to develop, it is that consciousness that gives me courage for the future and helps me to bear many difficulties in the present.

It is a splendid thing to look at something and to admire it, to think about it and to keep hold of it, and then to say: I am going to draw it, and work at it until I have fixed it on paper. Of course I do not mean to say I am satisfied with my work, in so far that I think I do not need to improve. But the way to improve is to work to-day as well as one can, then there will be progress to-morrow.

Of course I do not know what you will think of my drawings when you see them, but this much I know, I long very much for your coming.

(I have not many studies yet after the nude, but there are some that greatly resemble the Bargues; are they less original for that reason? It is perhaps rather because from the Bargues I have learned to understand nature.)

And when I write you: become a painter, it is after all not

because I think your present position without a charm of its own. But I think to be a painter is better still, and I should wish you to work in a studio of your own, instead of at a desk in your office. That's it.

I am sure that there in your studio something would be roused in you that you do not know now,—a great hidden force of working and creating. And that, once roused, is roused for ever.

When I hear Tersteeg talking about "charm" and "saleable," I merely think: work on which one has plodded hard and into which one has tried to put some character and sentiment is neither unattractive nor unsaleable. And it is perhaps better not at first to please everybody.

What fine weather we are having, there are signs of spring everywhere. I cannot drop drawing from the figure, that comes first for me, but sometimes I cannot keep from working outdoors. But I am busy with very difficult things, which I may not give up.

Of late I have made many studies of fragments of the figure, head, neck, breast, shoulder. Enclosed you will find a little sketch.

I should love to make more studies of the nude. You know I drew the "Exercices au Fusain," even several times, but they give no female figures.

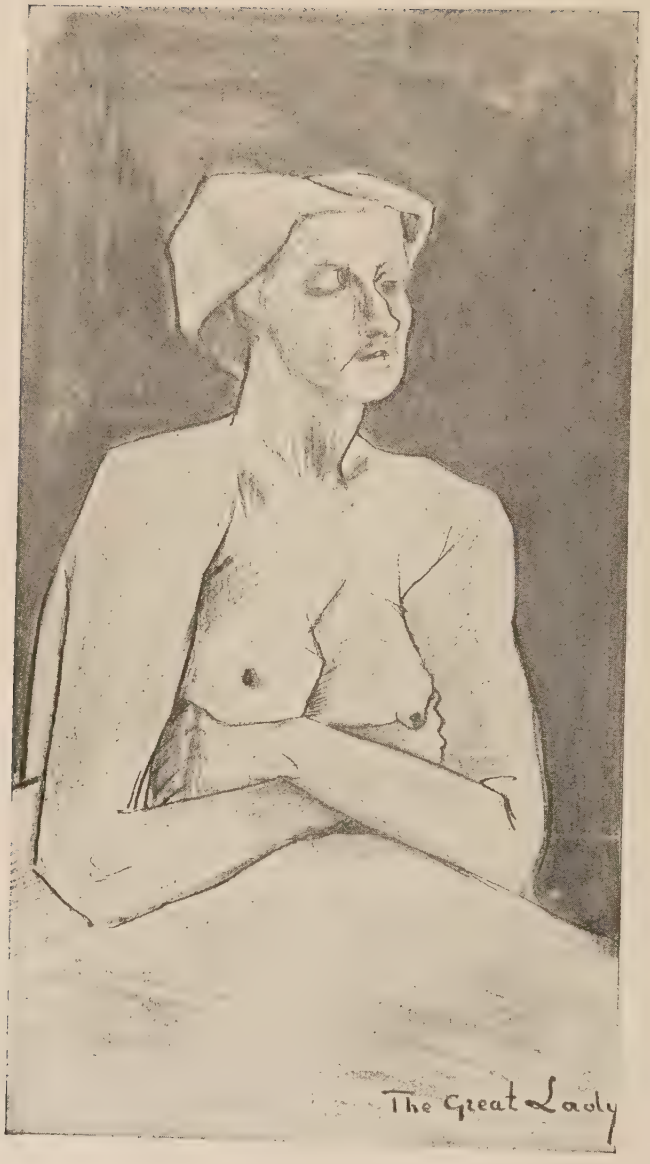
Of course, it is quite a different thing to draw it from life.

Such a little sketch as the enclosed is quite simple in line. But when you are sitting before your model, it is difficult enough to get those simple characteristic lines. Those lines are so simple that one can trace them with the pen, but I repeat, the question is to find those principal lines, so that with a few strokes or scratches the essential is expressed.

But it is not easy to select the lines, so that it seems they must naturally run so.

It is true, Theo, that lately, since I have been here at the Hague, I have spent more than fr. 100 a month, but if I did not do so, I would not be able to work with models and I would not make any progress.

I see it in other painters, for instance Breitner, they are afraid to take models regularly and they work little and slowly, and even then not always well. Breitner, however, has of late again taken models, and then there was much more character in his work, but now he has fallen ill. The English painters, especially the draughtsmen


The Great Lady

for the *Graphic*, etc., have models almost every day. One really cannot do without it, I think. When somebody with years of experience draws the figure from memory, after having studied it a great deal, it is all right, but to work from memory systematically seems to me too risky. Even Israëls, Blommers and Neuhuys do not do so, though they have so much experience.

So if I have spent more than fr. 100 a month here, it is because I could not do it with less. And, believe me, I do not spend it thoughtlessly or carelessly. I do wish I did not have to give Tersteeg back those fr. 25, for I need the money so badly in order to work on with energy. It does not make Tersteeg any poorer, and at first he said himself that I need not worry about the money For every fr. 25 which I cannot have, I must suffer in my work, and cannot do the things that ought to be done.

If I get my portfolios full of studies, they will repay me in money later on. I would rather earn more by and by than now, I would rather learn my profession well, than hurry to get a little drawing sold for pity's sake. The little sketch enclosed is scrawled after a larger study which has a more melancholy expression. There is a poem by Thomas Hood, I think, in which he tells of a rich lady who cannot sleep at night because during the day when she went out to buy a dress, she saw the poor seamstress, pale, consumptive, emaciated, sitting at work in a close room. And now she is conscience stricken about her wealth, and starts up anxiously at night. In short, it is a slender pale woman figure, restless in the dark night.

If you want me to do so, I will not speak about it again and send Tersteeg the fr. 25 from your next allowance, but if possible I would rather wait until later when he will take a drawing for it.

Well, good luck, and I repeat: I wish you might be at work in a studio of your own some day. Adieu.

Yours,

Vincent.

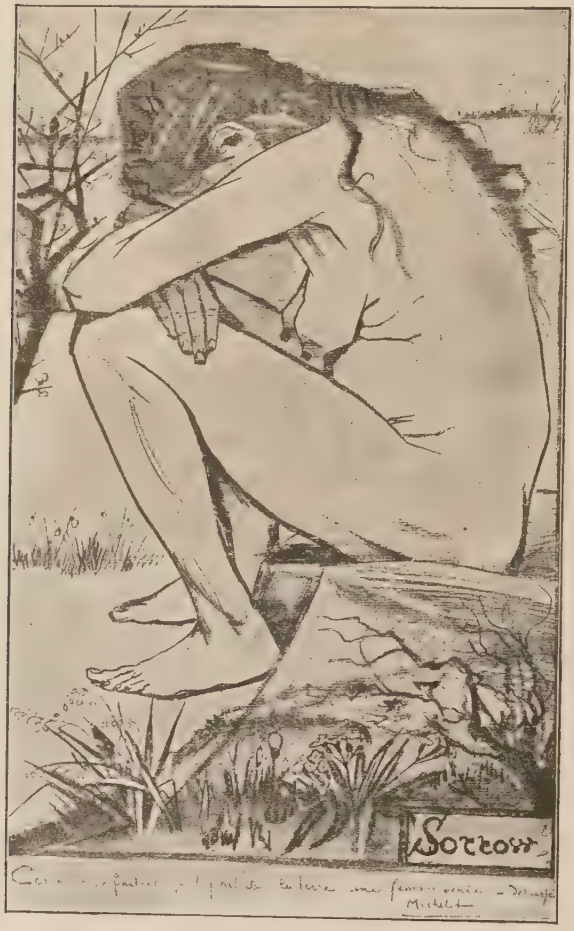
186

Dear Theo,

To-day I mailed you a drawing which I send to show my gratitude for all you have done for me, during what would otherwise

have been a hard winter. When you showed me last summer Millet's large woodcut " La Bergère," I thought: how much can be done with one single line. Of course I do not pretend to be able to express in a single contour as much as Millet. But I tried to put some sentiment in this figure. I only hope this drawing will please you.

And you see at the same time that I am hard at work. Now



SORROW

that I have started it, I should like to make about 30 studies of the nude.

The enclosed is in my opinion the best figure I have drawn as yet, therefore I thought I would send it to you.

This is not the study after the model, and yet it is directly after the model. You must know that I had two underlayers under my paper. I had been working hard to get the right contour and when I took the drawing from the board, it had been imprinted quite correctly on the two underlayers, and I finished them immediately from the first study.

So this one is even fresher than the first.

The two others I keep for myself, I should not like to part with them. You will see from this that it is not without reason I wrote to you: I would rather not return the money to Tersteeg now, I need it so much myself, and I think that working hard with a model is the shortest way to succeed. It is true the model I have is not so very expensive, but as it is an almost daily recurring expense, it is often hard enough for me to pay it. Well, arrange it as you think best, but if convenient to you, send what you promised not too late in the month. Adieu, a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

I think this drawing would look well in a simple grey mount. Of course I do not always draw in this way, but I am very fond of the English drawings done in this style, so no wonder I tried it for once, and as it was for you, who understands these things, I did not hesitate to be rather melancholy. I wanted to say something like:

" Mais reste le vide du cœur,
Que rien ne remplira,"

as in Michelet's book.

187

Dear Theo,

Your last letter with enclosed fr. 180 I received in good order, my hearty thanks for it.

I am very glad you liked the drawing I sent you, I think there really is something in it.

I wish you would have it put on a simple grey mount, for it will look best in that.

Further, I partly agree with you, in what you say about the aspect of some drawings having something that can be best compared to an *eau-forte non ébarbée.* However, I believe that this peculiar effect in drawings, which I think the amateurs rightly appreciate, is caused rather by a peculiar tremor of the hand when working under emotion, than by the material one uses (of course with etchings it is different, there it is caused by the *barbe* of the plate). I myself have among my studies a few, which look rather like what I shall call *non ébarbé.* If I have not fixed your drawing or have worked on it here and there again, after having fixed it, so so that there are spots that have a disagreeable shine, just dash a large glass of milk, or water and milk, over it and let it dry, and you will see it gives a peculiar saturated black, much more effective than is generally seen in a pencil drawing.

To get that peculiar aspect, *non ébarbé*, I think one ought to use not chalk but rather charcoal which has been soaked in oil.

Of course I sent the fr. 25 at once to Mr. Tersteeg and have received a receipt for it *without one written word.* He may speak about being "hurt," but I wish he would only consider how hurt I must have felt, always to hear such things as: you do not earn your living, you have lost your rights, and I don't know what else. Such things really hurt not less but infinitely more, *than what I said to him*, such things sometimes pierce to the heart and deeply grieve the soul.

But what is the use of talking any longer about it?

As to his buying or not, I consider that quite a different thing, quite apart from personal disputes or differences of view on some subjects; I should think his buying or not from me would depend not on me but on my work. Let him buy my work (as I make more progress) or not buy it, because he either likes it or does not. He may buy it for himself or for another amateur, but it is not exactly fair to let a personal antipathy influence one's judgment, or, on the contrary, to be influenced by the personal charm of some artist into overlooking faults in his work.

There certainly is affinity between a person and his work, but it is not easy to define what that affinity is, and on that question many judge quite wrongly.

And now, yes I know that mother is ill, and I know many other sad things besides, either in our own family or in others.

And I am not insensible to it, and I think I should not be able to draw "Sorrow" if I did not feel it. But since this summer it has become so clear to me that the disharmony between father, mother and myself has become a chronic evil, because there has been misunderstanding and estrangement between us for too long a time. And now it has gone so far, that from both sides we must suffer for it.

I mean we might have helped each other more, if we had tried on both sides long ago to live in closer understanding and to share weal and woe, always remembering that parents and children must remain one. We did not make these mistakes on purpose, and for the greater part they must be ascribed to the "force majeure" of difficult circumstances and a hurried life. Now it is so that I have become to father and mother little more than a half strange and half tiresome person, and I for my part, when at home, have also a lonesome and empty feeling. Opinions and professions differ so much that we unintentionally hinder each other, but I repeat it is quite *involuntary*. This is a very sad feeling, but life and the world are full of such instances, and really it does more harm than good to reproach each other and sometimes the best thing to do in such a case is to avoid each other. But I do not know what is best, I wish I did.

Well, father and mother find comfort in their work and I in mine. For, brother, notwithstanding all the little miseries I work with great animation. I have just received a letter from Rappard; I have been for some time "en froid" with him, but now we are again interested in each other's work. Probably he will soon come to see me. The other day I was at Blommer's studio; after all the exhibition of woodcuts did not come off, but I gained this much by it that at last I found the time to sort and arrange them well. But it is impossible for me to give enough time to it or to take the trouble to find new woodcuts, as day by day I become more absorbed in drawing.

To-day I made another nude study of a kneeling woman's

figure, and yesterday one of a girl knitting, but also nude, as I told you before I wanted to do.

Now, sleep well, it is late at night, once more thanks for what you sent, and believe me with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

I hope to make you a *pendant* for "Sorrow."

188

Dear Theo,

To-day I sent you a drawing: Vegetable gardens on the Laan van Meerdervoort.

So now you have one of my figures and one of my landscapes and I think you will see that I have made some progress.

Though this be "only black and white" and unsaleable??? and without charm??? I still hope there may be some character in it. And I think that instead of reproaching me for applying myself only to the drawing of things, this certainly proves that I take the most practical way. For it is easier to proceed from drawing to painting than, on the contrary, to make pictures without drawing the necessary studies for it.

Of course it causes me a great deal of worry and makes my life far from easy, when those on whom I thought I could depend for sympathy, like Mauve and Tersteeg, become indifferent or hostile and spiteful. From Mauve I have not heard anything, one day he is ill, and then again he needs rest, or is too busy.—How beautiful is his picture for the Salon!

But you understand these things yourself, so enough.—

This little drawing also needs a narrow grey mount. You write that you have moved, I will do my best to make now and then something for the walls of your new home. I have perhaps also a few good woodcuts you could use if you like them, as I have duplicates of some good ones. But those you must see and choose for yourself when you come this summer.

I have not moved, but I have had a change made in my house, that is in the attic I have had a little bedroom partitioned off, so

now I have more room in the studio, especially as the stove has been removed.

You see, in drawing there are a great many things that lots of people often overlook. There is a correct perspective of an interior for instance (I will send you a specimen of that too, some day), there are the great lines of a landscape, and then I myself see no chance of doing without study of the nude.

All this is essentially *drawing;* once having fairly mastered that, one sees the way out and I myself go quietly on that way, knowing that if only I persist, before long I will overtake a few of those who think they can skip such things.

All good luck to you, the weather is very cold and windy here, and that worries me a great deal, as I cannot go on with the views of the city for C. M., which I otherwise would make between times, but surely the mild weather will come again.

With a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

This little drawing has caused me more trouble than has been spent on many water-colours. I send it to the Bd. Montmartre[1] because then you can have it pressed and mounted at once.

189

Dear Theo,

I sometimes think: if my life were somewhat easier, how much more and how much better would I then be able to work. But I do work, and as you must have noticed from my last drawings I begin to see a light that will conquer the difficulties. But you know there is scarcely a day that besides the exertion of drawing, does not bring some difficulty or other, which in itself would be hard enough to bear. And you see there is a sorrow which I think I really do not deserve,—at least I do not know in what way I deserve it,—and which I should like to get rid of. You must tell me frankly if you will be so kind, whether you know the cause of the following, and can give me any information about it.

Theo's office.

Towards the end of January, I think a fortnight after my arrival here, Mauve's attitude towards me changed suddenly,—became as unfriendly as it had been friendly before.

I ascribed it to his not being satisfied with my work, and I was so anxious and worried over it, that it quite upset me and made me ill, as I wrote you at the time.

Mauve then came to see me, and gave me again the assurance that everything would come all right, and encouraged me. But then on a certain evening shortly after, he began to speak to me again in such a different way that it seemed as if there was quite a different man before me. I thought: my dear friend, it seems as if they have poisoned your ear with slander, but I was in the dark from which side the poisonous wind had blown. Mauve began among other things to imitate my speech and my manners, saying: "your face looks like this," "you speak like this," all in a spiteful way, but he is very clever at those things, and I must say it was like a well resembling caricature of me, but drawn with hatred. On that occasion he said a few things that only Tersteeg used to say about me. And I asked him: Mauve, have you seen Tersteeg lately? "No," said Mauve, and we talked on, but about ten minutes later, he dropped the remark that Tersteeg had been to see him that same day. Then the thought of Tersteeg involuntarily stayed with me, and I thought: is it possible, my dear Tersteeg, that you are at the back of all this? And I wrote him a note, *not impolite*, deliberately not impolite, I only said to him: sir, I am so sorry when things are said about me, as for instance "you do not earn your living," or "you do not work": you must understand such things are too unreasonable to let them pass, and they grieve me to the heart. During the last years I have had too many of such things to grieve me, and I think there must come an end to it now.

That was the note about which Tersteeg spoke to you on his first visit to Paris.

When he came back from Paris, I went to see him and told him, that if I had charged him with things for which he was not responsible, I hoped he would excuse me, because I was quite in the dark as to the cause of my difficulty. Well, then he was again very kind to me,—but though I still visited Mauve once in awhile, Mauve was moody and rather unkind.

And a few times I was told he was not at home, in short there were all the signs of a decided estrangement. I went to see him less and less, and Mauve never came to my house again, though it is not far away.

Mauve also became in his talk as narrow-minded, if I may call it so, as he used to be broad. I had to draw from casts, that was the principal thing, he said. I hate drawing from casts, but I had a few plaster hands and feet hanging in my studio, though not for the purpose of drawing. Once he spoke to me about drawing from casts in such a way as the worst teacher at the academy would not do, and I kept quiet, but when I got home I was so angry that I threw those poor plaster casts in the coal-bin, and they broke in pieces. And I thought: I will draw from casts only when they become whole and white again, and when there are no more hands and feet of living beings to draw from.

I then said to Mauve: man, do not speak to me again about plaster, for I cannot stand it. That was followed by a note from Mauve, that for two months he would not have anything to do with me. During those two months indeed we have not seen each other, but I have not been idle meanwhile, though I have not drawn from casts I can tell you, and I must say I worked with more animation and earnestness now that I was free. When the two months were almost past I just wrote to him to congratulate him on having finished his large picture, and once I spoke to him on the street for a moment.

Now the two months are long since past and he has not come to see me. And since then things have happened with Tersteeg, which made me write to Mauve. "Let us shake hands and not feel animosity or bitterness against each other, but it is too difficult for you to guide me and for me it is too difficult to be guided by you, if you require 'strict obedience' to all you say, and I cannot give that. So there is an end to the guiding and being guided. But that does not alter my feeling of gratefulness and obligation towards you."

Mauve has not answered this and I have not seen him since. What urged me to say to Mauve, we must each go our own way, was the evidence that Tersteeg really influenced Mauve. I learned that from Tersteeg himself, when he told me he would see to it that you stopped sending me money: "Mauve and I will see to it,

that there comes an end to this . . ." Theo, I am a man with faults and errors and passions, but I do not think I ever tried to deprive anyone of his bread or his friends. I have sometimes fought with people in words, but to attempt one's life because of a difference of opinion, that is not the work of an honest man, at least, these are no honest weapons.

Can you understand now that I am sometimes grieved over many things, grieved to the heart;

And that I am grieved about Mauve, for though I should not wish to have the same "guidance" from him again, I should like to shake hands with him once more, and wish he would do so with me.

Do you know something perhaps, that I do not, or can you give me some information about this matter? Adieu.

Yours,

Vincent.

Forgive me if I trouble you about it, but you see I am so in the dark. I finished another drawing of such a woman's figure as "Sorrow," but larger, and I think better than the first, and I am making a drawing of a street, where they are digging to lay sewer or water pipes: "Diggers in a Trench."

Breitner is still in the hospital and will perhaps have to stay there another month.

I am making the drawings for C. M., but I have been so depressed about what I have written you that it hindered me in my work, and then I thought: I must have light, perhaps Theo can give me some information.

190

Theo,

Since I wrote to Mauve: "do you know that those two months you spoke of, have long since passed, let us shake hands, and then each go his own way, rather than that there be a quarrel between you and me," I repeat since I wrote this and received no sign in reply, my grief chokes me.

Because—and you know this—I love Mauve, and it is so hard

that all the happiness he pictured to me will come to naught. For I am afraid that the better my drawings become the more difficulty and opposition I shall meet. Because I shall have to suffer much, especially from those peculiarities which I *cannot* change. In the first place my appearance and my way of speaking and dress, and then even later on when I shall earn more, I shall always move in a different sphere from most painters, because my conception of things, the subjects I want to make, inexorably demand it. Enclosed is a little sketch of diggers, I will tell you why I send it. Tersteeg said to me: "you failed before and now you will fail again, it will be the same story all over." Stop,—no, it is quite different now, and that reasoning is really nothing but a sophism.

That I was not fit for business or for professional study, does not prove at all that I am not fit to be a painter. On the contrary, had I been able to be a clergyman or an art dealer, then perhaps I would not have been fit for drawing and painting, and would neither have resigned nor taken my dismissal as such.

Because I really have a draughtsman's fist I cannot stop drawing, and I ask you, since the day I began to draw, have I ever doubted or hesitated or wavered? I think you know quite well that I pushed onward, and of course little by little I grew stronger in the battle.

Now I come back to this sketch,—it is made on the Geest, in the rain, in a street where I was standing in the mud, midst all the noise and confusion, and I send it to you to show that my sketch-book proves I try to seize quick impressions.

Now put for instance Tersteeg himself before a sand-hole on the Geest, where workmen are busy putting in water or gas-pipes, I should like to see what face he would put on, and what kind of sketch he would make of it. To stroll on wharves, and in alleys and streets and in the houses, waiting-rooms, even saloons, that is not a pleasant pastime, *unless for an artist.* As such, one would rather be in the dirtiest place where there is something to draw than at a tea party with charming ladies. Unless one wants to draw ladies, then a tea party is all right even for an artist. What I want to say is this: the searching for subjects, the living among working people, the worry and troubles with models, the drawing from nature on the very spot, is a rough work, even a dirty work at times, and indeed the manners and dress of a salesman are not

exactly most suitable for me, or for anyone else who does not have to talk with fine ladies and rich gentlemen, and to sell them expensive things and to make money, but who has for instance to draw diggers in a hole on the Geest. If I could do what Tersteeg can, if I were fit for that, I would not be fit for my profession, and for my profession it is better that I am as I am, than that I squeeze myself into forms that do not fit me.

I, who did not feel at ease in a fine coat in a fine store, who especially would not do so now, and would certainly be bored and bore others, I am quite a different person when I am at work on the Geest or on the heath or in the dunes. Then my ugly face and shabby coat perfectly harmonize with the surroundings and I am myself and work with pleasure. As to the "how to do it," I hope to be able to push onward.

When I wear a fine coat, the working people that I want for models are afraid of me and distrust me, or they want more money from me.

Well, I struggle along as well as I can, and I think I do not belong to those who complain "there are no models at the Hague."

So if remarks are made about my habits, meaning: dress, face, manner of speech, what answer shall I make . . . that such talk annoys me.

Am I ill-mannered in another sense, that is, impudent or without delicacy?

Look here, in my opinion all politeness is founded on good-will towards everybody, founded on the necessity felt by everyone who has a heart in his bosom, of helping others, of being of use to somebody, finally, the need one feels of living together and not alone. Therefore I do my best, I draw, not to annoy people, but to amuse them, or to make them see things worth observing and which not everybody knows.

I cannot believe, Theo, that I could be such a monster of impudence and impoliteness as to deserve to be cut off from society, or as Tersteeg says, "should not be allowed to stay in the Hague."

Do I lower myself by living with the people I draw, do I lower myself when I go into the houses of labourers and poor people, and when I receive them in my studio?

I think my profession requires it, and only those who do not

understand anything of painting or drawing would make objections to that.

I put the question: the draughtsmen who work for the *Graphic*, *Punch*, etc., where do they get their models? Do they hunt for them themselves in the poorest alleys of London, yes or no?

And their knowledge of the people, is it innate in them,—or have they acquired it in later years, by living among the people and by paying attention to things that many another passes by, by remembering what many another forgets?

When I go to see Mauve or Tersteeg I cannot express myself as I should wish, and perhaps I do myself more harm than good. When they are more accustomed to my way of speaking they will no longer take offence.

But do tell them now in my name, how things are, that if I have hurt them in speech or action I hope they will forgive me; tell them in better words than I can, with as much style and grace as is necessary, how *they* on their part have caused *me* much sorrow, much grief, much trouble in those few months, which through all these worries have seemed so long to me. *Make them understand this, they do not know it, they think I am unfeeling and indifferent.*

By so doing you will render me a great service, and I think in that way things can be arranged.

I wish they would only take me as I am. Mauve has been kind to me and has helped me thoroughly and well, but,—it only lasted a fortnight,—*That is too short.*

Adieu, Theo, try to do what you can, if I have some good luck instead of ill luck I need not be such a burden to you. Enough for this time, believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

191

Dear Theo,

I want to explain somewhat more clearly my answer to your saying: "Tersteeg has been to us almost as an elder brother, try to remain friends with him." My answer was, that he might be

so to you, but I for my part have only seen his unfriendly and harsh side for years.

In all those years, between the time when I left Goupil or got my dismissal, and when I began to draw (which I acknowledge was a mistake not to do at once), in those years when I was abroad without friends or help, suffering great misery (so that in London I often had to sleep in the open air, and in the Borinage did so three nights in succession) did he ever give me a piece of bread then? Did he ever encourage me, he who knew me of old, did he ever lend me a helping hand, when I almost broke down?

I think not. Did he ever help me in any way; no, except when he lent me the Bargues, after I had literally beseeched him four times.

When I sent him my first drawings he sent me a painting box, but not a cent of money. I readily believe those first drawings were not worth any money, but you see a man like Tersteeg might have argued: "I know him of old, and I will help him to get on," and he might have known I needed it so badly in order to live.

When I wrote to him from Brussels, "would it not be possible for me to work for a time at the Hague and have some intercourse with painters," he tried to put me off, and wrote to me: "oh no, certainly not, you have lost your rights"; I had better give lessons in English and French; of one thing he was sure, I was no artist; or I had better try to get *copy work* from Smeeton and Tilly, though the latter was not exactly in my neighbourhood, and besides in Brussels several lithographers had refused me this; there was no work, things were dull, was the answer.

When this summer I again showed him drawings he said: I had not expected this, but he did not *help* me, and did not take back his former words. When I came to the Hague after all, without asking his advice, he tried to cut me out, I hear he laughed at my becoming a painter, I perceived that Mauve thought me a greenhorn, and Mauve was quite astonished to find me a different person than he had heard described. I did not ask Mauve for money, but Mauve said of his own accord: you need money, I will help you to earn money,—you may be sure that now your hard years are over and the sun is rising for you, and you have worked hard for it and honestly deserve it. And the first thing Mauve did was to help me to get settled. And then all that changes—Mauve's

sympathy, that was to me like water to a parched plant, runs dry.

Because Tersteeg has poisoned Mauve's ear by saying: "take care, you cannot trust him with money, let him go, do not help him any longer, as a dealer I see no good in it," or at least something like this.

And when I tell him: Tersteeg, you must be careful what you say, he looks astonished: he has not said anything, he pretends I only imagined this. Until on a certain day he threatens me: "Mauve and I will take care that you will not receive any more money from Theo," then I doubted no longer, but realized: he betrays me. Because I knew what Mauve had told me about that money from you, that it would be very good for me to receive it still for at least another year.

When you forsake somebody in the winter and then try to take his bread from him, is that to *force* a person or not?

That is not considerate, not delicate, that is not good manners, that is not humane. And what am I, nothing but a man who has a difficult trying work, for which he needs quiet and peace and some sympathy, otherwise the work is impossible.

Theo, think these things over and write to me soon. Though I felt terribly grieved at Mauve's neglecting me, I have struggled on this winter as best I could.

But can you wonder that it was a shock to me and that it sometimes seems as if my heart would break.

Such as Tersteeg "laugh" at that, but you are my brother and I hope you will not laugh.

I have still other things to tell you about my plans for the future, how I intend to carry on my work. But first you must come here, and so I do not write about that now, as I hope it will not be so very long before you come. You have seen the two drawings I sent you. These were not made by chance, but I can produce such work regularly and it improves as I go on. So it is not unreasonable if I insist upon it being so arranged that I need no longer be afraid that the strictly necessary will be taken from me or that I must always feel as if it were the bread of charity.

The strictly necessary is bread, clothes, rent, model-drawing materials. And in the way I arrange it that is not so very much, and I can make drawings in return, if people will only take them. I do

not desire to become rich, but of course I cannot do without those strictly necessary things. A workman is worthy of his hire.

I wish it might be arranged so I could receive the money weekly, because it is so hard to reckon a month in advance.

If Tersteeg takes back the worst things he has said, I will think he said them unintentionally and then it is forgiven and forgotten.

If he persists in them, I do not consider him as a friend but as an enemy, who begrudges me the very light of my eyes. Do not be angry with me, Theo, for troubling you about this. But this is the way things have been all winter long and what have I done to deserve all this trouble? Involuntarily all that anxiety and worry make me nervous and flurried in speech and manner, and when Mauve imitates me, saying: "this is the sort of face you make," "this is the way in which you speak," I answer: my dear friend, if you had spent rainy nights in the streets of London like me, or cold nights in the Borinage, hungry, homeless, feverish, you would also perhaps have such ugly lines in your face and a husky voice too.

Adieu, Theo, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

It was impossible to make the views of the city for C. M. because of all that rain and wind. So neither did I receive the money for them. Therefore as I have to pay the rent on the first of May, if you could send something about that time, it would be very welcome.

192

Dear Theo,

To-day I met Mauve and had a very painful conversation with him, which made it clear to me that Mauve and I are separated forever. Mauve has gone so far that he cannot retract, at least certainly would not want to do so. I had asked him to come and see my work and then to talk things over. Mauve refused point-blank: "I will certainly not come to see you, that is all over."

At last he said: "you have a vicious character." Then I turned around, it was in the dunes, and I walked home alone.

Mauve takes offence at my having said, "I am an artist,"—

which I do not take back, because that word included of course the meaning: always seeking without absolutely finding. It is just the contrary from saying, "I know it, I have found it."

As far as I know, that word means: "I am seeking, I am striving, I am in it with all my heart."

I have ears in my head, Theo. If somebody says, "you have a vicious character," what must I do then?

I turned around and went back alone, but with a heavy heart, because Mauve had dared to say that to me. I shall not ask him to explain it, neither shall I excuse myself. And still—and still—and still—! I wish Mauve were sorry for it.

They suspect me of something,—it is in the air—I keep something back.—Vincent is hiding something that cannot stand the light.

Well, gentlemen, I will tell you, you who prize good manners and culture, and rightly so if only it be the true kind, which is the more delicate, refined, manly, to desert a woman or to stand by a forsaken woman?

This winter I met a pregnant woman, deserted by the man whose child she bore.

A pregnant woman who in winter had to walk the streets, had to earn her bread, you understand how.

I took that woman for a model, and have worked with her all the winter. I could not pay her the full wages of a model, but that did not prevent my paying her rent, and, thank God, I have been able thus far to protect her and her child from hunger and cold, by sharing my own bread with her. When I met that woman she attracted my notice because she looked ill. I made her take baths, and as much nourishing food as I could, she has become much stronger. I went with her to Leyden, where there is a maternity hospital where she will be confined. (No wonder she was ill, the child was not in position, and she had to have an operation, the child had to be turned with forceps. However, there is a good chance of her getting through. She will be confined in June.)

It seems to me that every man worth his salt would have done the same in a similar case.

What I did was so simple and natural, that I thought I could keep it to myself. Posing was very difficult for her, but she has

learned it, I have made progress in my drawing because I had a good model. The woman is now attached to me like a tame dove, I for my part can only marry once, and how can I do better than marry her, because that is the only way to help her, and otherwise misery would force her back in her old road, that ends in a precipice. She has no money, but she helps me to earn money in my profession.

I am full of ambition and love for my work and profession, when I gave up painting and water-colours for some time it was because I felt so bad about Mauve's deserting me, and if he came back I would begin again with new courage. Now I cannot look at a brush, it makes me nervous.

I have written: Theo can you give me information about Mauve's behaviour, perhaps this letter can give you light. You are my brother, it is natural that I speak to you about private things, but anyone who says to me, " you have a vicious character," to such a person I cannot speak for the time being.

I could not do otherwise, I did what my hand found to do, I worked. I thought I should have been understood without words, I had not forgotten another woman for whom my heart was beating, but she was far away and refused to see me, and this one, she walked the street, sick, pregnant, hungry, in winter, I could not do otherwise. Mauve, Theo, Tersteeg, you have my bread in your hands, will you take it from me, or turn your back on me? Now I have spoken, and await what further will be said to me.

Vincent.

I send you a few studies because you can see from them that she helps me a great deal by posing.

My drawings are " of my model and me." The woman with a white bonnet is her mother.

But I should like to get these three back from you, as in a year when probably I shall draw quite differently, my work will be founded on these studies, that I now make as conscientiously as I can. You see they are made with care. When later on I shall make an interior or a waiting-room or the like, these will be of use to me, because I shall have to consult them for the details. But I thought it would be well perhaps if you could see how I use my time.

Those studies require a rather dry technique, had I worked on

effect they would be of less use to me afterwards. But I think you will understand this yourself. The paper I should like best is that on which the bent woman's figure is drawn, but if possible the colour of unbleached linen. I have none of it left, *of that thickness*, I think they call it double Ingres, I cannot get it here. When you see how that drawing is made, you will understand that it could not be done on thin paper. I wanted to send you with it a small figure in black merino, but I cannot roll it. The chair near the large figure is not finished, because I want there an old oaken chair.

193

Dear Theo,

If I want to succeed in giving you further insight into that which I have already written you about, you must understand the root of it. And I must not put my visit to Amsterdam in a better light than it really was. But I begin by begging you not to think me impertinent when I contradict you. And before all I must thank you heartily for the enclosed fr. 50.

If I do not put it strongly, it would be of no use, but I would remain silent if you wanted me to give in to you, but I do not think you want this and you yourself will perhaps not think it unnatural, that there are things in life which are less developed in you than your insight in business, in which I fully consider you twice as advanced as I, and I shall not readily risk telling you this or that is not so. On the contrary, especially when you explain things to me, I often feel you know things better than I. But, on the other hand, when it concerns love I am often astonished at your way of thinking.

For that last letter of yours has given me more food for thought than you perhaps know. I think my mistake and the real reason of my being refused is this: when one is without money, one is of course of no account, so it was a mistake and shortsightedness on my part to take literally what Mauve said, or to suppose for a moment Tersteeg will remember that I have had so much trouble already.

At the present time money is what the right of the strongest used to be. To contradict a person is fatal, and if one does, the reaction

is not that the other party is made to reflect, but the result is one gets a blow of the fist. That is to say in the form of: "I will not buy from him again," or "I will not help him again."

This being so I risk my head when I contradict you, but I do not know, Theo, how I could do otherwise, if my head must be cut off, here is my neck. You know the circumstances and know that on your help depends my life or death. But I am between two fires,—if to your letter I answer: yes, Theo you are right, I will give up Christine; then, in the first place I tell an untruth in agreeing with you, and in the second, I bind myself to commit a vile thing.

When I contradict you and you act like T. and M. it costs me my head so to say:—

Well, for Heaven's sake head off, if it must be so. The other thing is still worse.

So here begins a short memorandum, explaining clearly a few things, which I think may possibly cause you to withdraw your help, but to conceal them in order to keep your help seems to me an underhanded thing to do, and I would rather risk the worst. If I succeed in making you understand what I think you do not understand as yet, then Christine, her child and myself will be safe. And in order to accomplish this I must risk saying what I shall say.

To express my feelings for K. I said resolutely "she, and no other." And her "no, never never," was not strong enough to make me give her up. I still had hope, and my love remained alive, notwithstanding this refusal which I considered as a piece of ice that would melt. But I could find no rest. It was a strain that became unbearable, because she always kept silent and I never received a word in answer.

Then I went to Amsterdam. There they told me: "when you are in the house, K. leaves it. To your 'she, and no other' she answers, 'he certainly not' your persistence is *disgusting*." I put my hand in the flame of the lamp and said: "let me see her for as long as I can keep my hand in the flame," and no wonder that Tersteeg perhaps noticed my hand afterwards. But I think they put out the lamp and said: "*you shall not see her*." Well, that was too much for me, especially when they spoke of my wanting to force her, and I felt that the crushing things they said to me

were unanswerable, and that my "she, and no other" had been killed.

Then, not at once, but very soon I felt that love die within me, a void, an infinite void came in its stead. You know I believe in God, I did not doubt the power of love, but then I felt something like: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me," and everything became a blank. I thought: have I been deceiving myself. . . . "O! God there is no God."

That cold terrible reception in Amsterdam was too much for me, at last my eyes were opened.—

Enough.—Then I received diversion and encouragement through Mauve, I threw myself with all my strength into my work. Then after I had been thrown over by Mauve and had been ill for a few days, towards the end of January, I met Christine.

You say, Theo, if I had really loved K. I would not have acted so. But do you understand better now, that after what happened at Amsterdam I could not go any further, should I have despaired then, why should an honest man despair,—I am no criminal,—I do not deserve to be treated in such a beastly way. Well, what can they do, they got the best of me, they have thwarted me there at Amsterdam. But now I do not ask their advice any more, and being of age I ask you, am I free to marry, yes or no? Am I free to put on a workman's clothes and live as a workman, yes or no? To whom am I responsible, who will try to force me?

Whoever wants to hinder me, to the devil with him!

You see, Theo, I have had enough of it all, think it over and you will understand. Is my path less straight, because somebody says: "you have gone astray"? C. M. also always talks about the right path, just like Tersteeg and the clergymen. But C. M. calls de Groux also a bad character, so in the future I will let him talk, my ears are tired of it. To forget it, I lie down in the sand by an old tree trunk and make a drawing of it. In a linen blouse, smoking a pipe and looking at the deep blue sky—or at the moss or the grass. That quietens me. And I feel just as calm when for instance Christine or her mother poses, and I estimate the proportion and try to suggest the body with its long undulating lines under the folds of a black dress. Then I am a thousand miles away from C. M. and K., and much happier. But—alas then the worries

come and I must either talk or write about money, and then it all begins anew. Then I think T. and C. M. would do so much better if they did not bother about my "path" but encouraged my drawing.

You will say C. M. does so, but listen why his order has not been filled as yet.

Mauve said to me: that Uncle of yours has only given that order because he was at your studio once, but you must understand that it does not mean anything, and it will be the first and the last, and then there will be nobody to take an interest in you. You must know, Theo, *that I cannot stand such things*, if such things are said,—my hand drops as if paralysed. Especially as C. M. has already said some things about conventions, I believe. I have made for C. M. 12 drawings for fr. 30, that is fr. 2.50 a piece, it is a difficult job, there was more than fr. 30 worth of work in it, and I don't deserve that I should have to consider it a charity or the like. For the six others I had already given myself much trouble. I had made the studies for them,—and there it stopped.

The trouble for the new ones has already been taken, so it is not laziness, but I am paralysed.

I reason with myself: I will not mind it; but I am nervous and such a thing does not pass over, but comes back when I try my hand at them again, so then I must steer another course and begin another work.

I do not understand Mauve,—it would have been kinder of him never to have meddled with me. *What do you advise me, to make the drawings for* C. M. or not? I really do not know what to do.

There used to be a better feeling among the painters, now they try to eat each other up, and are big personages, who have villas and scheme to get along. I would rather be on the Geest, or in any grey, miserable, muddy and gloomy alley, there I am never bored, but in those fine houses I am, and I think it wrong to be bored, so then I say: that is no place for me, I will not go there any more. Thank God, I have my work, but instead of earning money by it, I need money to be able to work, so that is the difficulty. When in a year, or I do not know how long, I shall be able to draw that Geest or any other street as I see it, with those figures of old women, workmen, girls, then Tersteeg, etc., will be very kind But then they will hear me thunder: "let me alone,"

and I shall say: you deserted me when I was in trouble, friend *I do not know you*, go away, you stand in my light.

Dear me, why should I be afraid, what do I care about Tersteeg's "unsaleable" or "without charm"? At times when I feel dispirited, I look at "Les Bêcheurs" by Millet, and "Le Banc des Pauvres" by de Groux, and then Tersteeg becomes so small, so insignificant, and all those talks of his become so poor, that my spirits rise and I light my pipe and set to drawing again. But if sooner or later at such a moment a "civilized" person would cross my path he might hear things that would disabuse him.

You will ask me, Theo, whether these things are also applicable to you, my answer is: "Theo, who has given me bread and helped me? I think you did, so it certainly is not applicable to you." But sometimes the thought comes to me, why is Theo not a painter, will not that "civilization" begin to bother him at last? Will he not regret afterwards that he has not left "civilization" for what it is worth, and has not learned a handicraft, taken a wife and put on the painter's blouse? But there may be reasons for it which I cannot appreciate. In affairs of love I do not know whether you have yet learnt its A B C. Do you think that pretentious of me? My meaning is, that one feels best what love is when sitting near a sick bed, sometimes without a cent of money in one's pocket. It is no gathering of strawberries in spring, that only lasts a few days, and most of the months are grey and gloomy. But in that gloom one learns something new, and I sometimes think that you know it and sometimes I think: he does not.

I want to go through the joys and sorrows of domestic life, in order to paint it from my own experience. When I came back from Amsterdam I felt that my love,—so true, so honest and strong, had literally been *killed*. But after death there is a resurrection. Resurgam.

Then I found Christine. There was no time to hesitate or to defer. I had to act. If I do not marry her it would have been kinder of me to have let her alone. But by this step a chasm will be made, I decidedly "lower" myself, as they call it, but that is not forbidden, that is not wrong, though the world calls it so. I live as a labourer. That suits me, I wanted to do so before, but could not then carry it out. I hope that across the chasm you will

continue to stretch out your hand to me. I mentioned fr. 150 a month, you said that I needed more.

Wait a minute, my expenses on the average never exceeded fr. 100 a month, since I left Goupil, except when I had to travel. And at Goupil's at first I had fr. 30, and afterwards fr. 100 a month.

It is true during these last months my expenses have been more, but I had to set up housekeeping, and I ask you were these expenses unreasonable or extravagant? The less so if you know what those expenses included. And how often in those long years did I have much less than fr. 100. And if sometimes I had expenses for travelling, have I not learned the languages and developed my mind, is that money thrown away?

Now I want to lay a straight path for my feet. If I postpone marriage there is something crooked in my position that is repulsive to me. She and I will skimp and be as saving as possible, if we can only marry. I am thirty years old and she is thirty-two, so we are children no longer. As to her mother and her child, the latter takes away all stain from her, I respect a woman who is a mother and I do not ask after her past. I am glad that she has a child, that gives her exactly the experience she needs.

Her mother is very energetic and deserves a medal, because she has supported a family of eight children for years. She would not want to be dependent, she makes her living as a charwoman.

I am writing you late in the evening. Christine is not well and the time for her going to Leyden is at hand. You must excuse me if this letter is written badly, as I am very tired.

But after receiving your letter I wanted to write you at once.

My refusal in Amsterdam was so decisive, I was dismissed so decidedly that it would have been foolish to go on any longer.

But ought I to have despaired then, jumped in the water or something of that kind, God forbid,—I would have done so if I had been a bad man. I have started a new life, not purposely, but because I had a chance to begin anew and did not refuse to do so.

But now it is another case, and Christine and I understand each other better. We need not mind what anybody says, but of course we do not pretend to keep up any social standing. Acquainted with the prejudices of the world, I know that what I have to do is to retire from the sphere of my own class, which anyhow cast me out

long ago. But that is all they can do, and they may go no further. May be I will still wait awhile before we set up housekeeping together, because the circumstances are too difficult, but if I marry I will do so quietly, without giving notice to anyone, if remarks are made I shall not pay any heed to them. As she is a Catholic, the wedding will be more simple still, for then of course the church is out of the question, neither she nor I want to have anything to do with it.

You will say that is short and blunt—que soit.

I shall only know one thing,—drawing, and she has only one regular work, posing. I wish it were possible to take the house next to this, it is exactly large enough, because the attic is arranged so that it can be made into a bedroom, and the studio is large and light, much better than the one here. But will it be possible? But even if it were only a hole I had to live in, I would rather have a crust of bread at my own hearth, however poor it might be, than live without marrying her.

She knows what poverty is, so do I. Poverty has advantages and disadvantages, yet notwithstanding poverty we risk it. The fishermen know that the sea is dangerous and the storm terrible, but they have never found those dangers sufficient reason for remaining ashore. They leave that philosophy to those who like it. Let the storm arise, the night descend, which is worse, danger or the fear of danger? For my part I prefer reality, the danger itself. Adieu, Theo, it is late, do not be angry with my letter, I am tired and yet I wanted to write, I wish you could understand it all, and that I could express myself in a clearer and kinder way, but do not take offence at it, and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

I believe, or rather it begins to dawn on me, that there might be a shadow of a chance, that the thought: "Theo will withdraw his help when I contradict him," is perhaps quite unnecessary. But, Theo, I have so often seen such things happen, that I would not esteem you less and would not be angry with you if you did so, because I would think: he knows no better, they all act like that, from thoughtlessness and not from malice.

If I may keep your help, that would be something quite

unexpected, some good luck on which I did not count, for I have lived a long time with that terrible thought before me, and Christine too, because I always told her, "Lass, I fear there will come a time when I shall be left quite without means." But I did not tell you so, before the right moment had come. If you let me keep your help, that would be a relief, a blessing so unexpected, so unhoped for, that it would quite upset me with joy, and even now I dare not think of it, and I put away the thought with all my strength, even while I write to you about it with a steady hand, not to show my weakness. What I experienced this winter from Mauve has been a lesson for me, which has kept me prepared for the worst—a death sentence from you—namely that you stop your help.

You will say: but the help has not been stopped—but I received it with a certain reserve, thinking: he does not know yet what he will know one day, and before the crisis comes, I have no rest and I am prepared for the worst.

Now the crisis has come and I cannot decide, I dare not hope as yet. To Christine I said: I shall be able to help you until you go to Leyden. When you come back from Leyden, I do not know how you will find me, with or without bread, but what I have I will share with you and the child. Christine does not know any details, neither does she ask them, but she knows I shall be frank with her, and she wants to stay with me *quand bien même.*

Until now I always thought it probable that you would drop me as soon as you knew all. So I lived from day to day with a dark fear of the worst, of which I dare not yet think myself free. I also worked from day to day, not daring to order more drawing or painting materials than I could pay for, not daring to undertake any painting, not daring to push on, as I would have done if I could have counted on the sympathy of Mauve and Tersteeg: thinking that if their kindness was superficial, their unkindness was more deeply rooted, in short, Mauve's word: "that is all over" was taken seriously by me, not when he said it (for then I put on a brazen face and braved it, like the Indians who say "it does not hurt" when they are tortured). But since I threw the plaster casts in the coal-bin he wrote to me: "for two months I will not have anything to do with you." Well, I for my part always thought: I can expect nothing more from Mauve or Tersteeg, and I will thank God if Theo will continue sending me

the necessary, until I can bring Christine safely to Leyden and then I will explain it to him and say: stay,—I have done so and so Do you understand this——?

I am prepared for the worst, how will it be, speak plainly

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Dear Theo,

If in my former letter I told you some things about her which are rather gloomy, it is because I want to state from the beginning, that I do not stand in a garden of roses, but in reality. And because I want to protest beforehand against sentimental considerations, such as for instance father and mother would not fail to make, if I asked their advice or only told them the story.

Sentiment and sentimentality are two very different things, which they cannot distinguish one from the other. And if I spoke about it, father would perhaps think he had to play the part of a gendarme, which would be quite out of place and of little use. So you must excuse me if I do not speak a word about it to father and mother, and do not want them to meddle with it. If father refused to give his consent, there are terms in the law which as I am of age, guarantee my independence, but I do not think father will go so far as to oppose me.

They will say: "you marry beneath your rank and you are too poor." My answer to this is: if I intended to live in style the result would be very bad. But as I intend to live in a house consisting of a studio, one room, and a little kitchen, with a bedroom in the attic, and as my way of living will be very simple, it can be done, and two persons living together can live more cheaply than one.

"On est sûr de périr à part, on ne se sauve qu'ensemble."

I asked K. if she would risk marrying me. You know how I was refused, but the way I was received in Amsterdam was much worse than I told you. They told me I wanted to force her, she refused to see me, to speak to me, not during *one* visit, but during the three days of my stay. If they tell me "you try to force her," it is only said, Theo, by those who entirely misunderstand me.

What I am doing now proves sufficiently that I did not want to force K. then.

This woman with whom I am now understands me better. In a short time she became as meek as a tame dove, certainly not from forcing on my part, but because she saw that I was not rough. Well, this one has understood it, and she said to me: "I know that you do not have much money, but even if you had less, I will put up with everything, if you only stay with me and let me stay with you, I am so much attached to you that I could not be alone again." If someone says that to me, and shows by everything, more in action than in words, that she means it, no wonder then, that before her I drop the mask of reserve, of almost roughness that I kept so long, because I did not want to flatter.

And now has this woman been the worse for it, or have I been the worse for it, that things have gone so? I am quite astonished to see her become brighter and more cheerful every day, she is so changed that she seems quite a different person from the sick pale woman I met this winter. Yet I have not done so much for her, I only told her: do this or that, and you will become well again, and she has not thrown my advice to the wind, and when I saw that she did not so do, I tried even harder to help her.

Perhaps I can understand her better than anyone else, because she has a few peculiarities, that would have been repulsive to many others.

First her speech, which is very ugly and is a result of her illness, then her temper caused by a nervous disposition, so that she has fits of anger that would be unbearable to most people.

I understand those things, they do not bother me, and until now I have been able to manage them. She on her part understands my own temper, and it is like a tacit understanding between us not to find fault with each other.

If you know the large drawing in the "Graphic" by Frank Holl, "The Deserter" I should say she resembles the woman figure in it.

Every day she learns better how to pose, and that is worth *so* much to me. She is no trouble, no hindrance, but she helps and she works with me. She has no pretensions, of wanting this or that, but when there is nothing but bread and coffee, she puts up with it and does not complain.

But, Theo, I am pining to see you and speak to you. I am also longing for a letter. If I knew that you would not turn your back

on me for this reason, I would be as happy as a man can be. It is true that at first I shall want some help. If I must do without, it would be very bad indeed for me and also for her; but that help need not be more than I received when alone. And my energy increases, and although I have been trying hard to get on, of course I try still harder now, and if I may count on your help and sympathy a little longer, I will succeed in earning the necessary by the sale of my work. The first step I should like to take is to rent the house next door, about which I wrote to you. As soon as she comes back from Leyden I will marry her, without telling anyone, quietly and without any fuss. Then we would be glad to have that house and we are prepared to live as simply as possible.

And if you could come and see things for yourself, you would realize that you may be sure she as well as I work as hard as we can.

I wish her confinement were over, that is a heavy ordeal that still awaits her. But so far everything goes well, since that visit to Leyden. But neither she nor I are standing in a rose garden, or dreaming in the moonlight, we have a hard time before us, so much the better. I heartily hope you will not take this in a melancholy way. Of course if K. had only responded in the least to my feelings, this would not have happened. But after my visit to Amsterdam I had such a decided refusal, that there was not the least chance of winning her. Unless my financial circumstances changed totally in a short time, which will not happen now, for though I shall earn by and by so much that this woman can live on it with me, it will not be enough to keep up a social standing, besides I do not feel the least inclination or longing for it. You know what I want: just enough to live on, but for more than that I do not care. What I should like best would be to have fixed weekly wages, like any labourer, for which I would work with all my strength and energy.

Being a labourer I feel at home in the labouring class, and more and more I will try to live and take root there.

I cannot do otherwise, I do not want to do otherwise, I cannot understand another way. Adieu, a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

Dear Theo,

I received your letter with enclosed fr. 100 and thank you very much for it.

Your letter has given me more light than all my own worry and fretting about that question Mauve and Tersteeg. I congratulate you on finding it out, for now I think I understand it better. And if I understand you rightly, the only thing I have to do is to work on quietly without worrying and thinking about it as much as I did. If I think too much about it, I get that same dizzy feeling, which you say a person gets, who has not studied perspective, when he tries to follow the fugitive lines in a landscape, and to account for them.

And like the whole perspective changes with the shifted position of the eye, which depends not on the subject, but on the man who is looking (whether he stoops or stands on an elevation), so I think the change in Mauve and Tersteeg has been in part only imaginary, and can be accounted for by my own state of mind. I do not see clearly in such things, but your letter showed me distinctly that there is no reason for me to worry, if only I work on. And now enough of this, there are other things I want to write about.

I was greatly touched by the sympathy of Heyerdahl. Give him my best regards, and tell him I certainly hope to make his acquaintance some day, and will greatly appreciate it.

Now I have finished two larger drawings: First, "Sorrow," but in a larger size, only the figure, without any surroundings. But the pose has been changed a little, the hair is not hanging down the back, but falls over the shoulder partly in a plait. So the shoulder, the neck and the back are more in view. And the figure has been drawn more carefully. The other: "The Roots," represents some tree roots on a sandy ground. Now I tried to put in the landscape the same sentiment as in the figure: The clinging convulsively and passionately to the earth, and yet being half torn up by the storm. In that pale slender woman's figure as well as in the black gnarled and knotty roots, I wanted to express something of the struggle for life. Or rather because I tried to be faithful to nature, as I saw it before me, without philosophizing

about it, involuntarily, in both cases something of that great struggle is shown. At least it seemed to me there was some sentiment in them, but I may be mistaken, well you must judge for yourself.

If you like them, they will perhaps be fit for your new home, and then I have made them for your birthday, for which I send you my best wishes. But as they are rather large (a full page Ingres) I do not know if I can send them at once. Tell me, do you think Tersteeg would call me impudent or pretentious if I asked to have them enclosed when a box goes to Paris?

Though "The Roots" is only a pencil drawing, I have brushed in it with pencil, and scraped it off again, as if I were painting.

About the carpenter's pencil I reason thus. The old masters, what did they use for drawing? Certainly not Faber B, BB, BBB, etc. etc., but a piece of rough graphite. Perhaps the instrument which Michelangelo and Dürer used resembled somewhat a carpenter's pencil. But I was not there to see it for myself, so I do not know, I only know that with a carpenter's pencil one can get effects quite different from those with thin Fabers, etc.

I prefer the graphite in its natural form, to that cut so fine in those expensive Fabers. And the shininess disappears by throwing some milk over it. In working out of doors with conté crayon, the strong light prevents one from seeing clearly what one is doing, and one perceives that it has become too black, but graphite is more grey than black, and one can always raise it a few tones by working in it again with the pen, so that the strongest effect of graphite becomes light again in contrast to the ink.

Charcoal is good, but when one keeps at it too long, it loses its freshness, and to keep the delicateness of touch one must fix it immediately. In landscape too, I see that draughtsmen like for instance Ruysdael and van Goyen, and Calame, Roelofs too among the moderns, used it often. But if somebody invented a good pen to use out of doors, with an inkstand to go with it, perhaps more pen drawings would be given to the world.

One can do great things with charcoal soaked in oil; I have seen that from Weissenbruch, the oil fixes the charcoal and at the same time the black becomes warmer and deeper. But I say to myself, it is better to do it a year hence than to do it now, because I do

not want the beauty to come from the material, but from within myself. When I am a little more advanced I will dress up nicely now and then, that means I will work with a more effective drawing material. And if I then only have some power within me things will go doubly smoothly and the result will be better than I expected.

But first before any success must come the hand to hand struggle with the things in nature.

Last year I wrote you a great many letters full of reflections on love. Now I do not do so any longer, because I am too busy putting those same things into practice. She for whom I felt what I wrote to you, is not in my path, she is out of my reach, in spite of all my passionate longing. Would it have been better always to have kept thinking of her and to overlook what came in my way? Whether I acted logically or illogically I cannot decide myself.

Suppose I begin to-day a drawing, for instance, of a digger, but he says: I must go, I will not or cannot pose any longer; as I began to draw him without asking his permission I have not the right to be angry with him for leaving me with an unfinished drawing. But must I entirely give up drawing a digger now?

I think not, especially when to-morrow I meet another, who says : I will come, not only to-day but to-morrow and after to-morrow, and I understand what you want, do as you like, I have patience and goodwill to help you. Though I did not then remain true to my first impression, would I have done better to have said. no, I must decidedly have that first digger, even if he says I cannot and I will not? And when I once begin No. 2 I may certainly not work with the thought of No. 1, for then I would not be true to nature, that is the point. And to my former letter I add this. In order to succeed I want your help, but I think the expenses would not be more but rather less, than what you have sent these past months.

I will and dare undertake it, if I may count for another year on fr. 100 a month.

Well, I hope to earn something besides, but if this fails I shall have to stint myself, it is true, but I shall manage And then afterwards when that year is past?—

I think there are no signs in my work that indicate I shall fail, if I only can continue to work and do my best. And I am not a person who works slowly or tamely.

Drawing becomes a passion to me and I throw myself into it more and more, and where there's a will there's a way.

Where there is a will there is a way, but it must come from both sides. *The will* in me must be the making of things, *the will* in those who have or might get sympathy for me, must be the buying or selling of those things. *The will* being there, I think *the way* may be found.

But if everybody spoke like Tersteeg about "unsaleable" and "without charm" there would be heaps of annoyances in store for me. However it may be, I will try still harder to conquer the "unsaleable" and "without charm."

It has been very stormy for three nights. Last Saturday night the window of my studio gave way (the house in which I live is very shaky), four large window panes broke and the frame was torn loose. You can imagine it was not pleasant. The wind came blowing across the open meadows and my window got it at first-hand—the drawings torn from the wall, the easel upset, the railing downstairs also thrown down. With the help of my neighbour I have been able to tie up the window, and before the hole at least three feet square I nailed a blanket.

I never slept a wink all night as you can imagine. And there was great trouble to get it fixed next day, because it was Sunday. The landlord is a poor devil, he gave the glass, I paid for the labour. But this is another reason why I want to take the house next door. It is arranged thus: the studio, larger than mine, the light very good. There is a finished attic, so that you do not see the rafters and tiles, very large so that you can divide it in as many rooms as you like (I have the partitions for it). The rent is fr. 12.50 a month, a strong well-built house, but it is so cheap because it is "only on the Schenkweg," and the rich people whom the owner expected do not want to live there.

I should like very much to take it, and the owner would like to have me, he spoke to me about it first, and then I went to see it.

And now I close by saying that I assure you, I often think of home, and I suppose when six months have passed, and the thing

I wrote you about has happened, and father and mother come to see me, this would bring a change in our feelings, on both sides. But alas, the moment has not arrived, and we must first try to get things started. For father and mother, whom I may consider as amateurs in the case, will like it very much when it is more finished (more finesse like the Belgian dealers say according to Mauve) but the rough sketch that you would understand if you were here, would make them dizzy, to say the least. Adieu, best wishes,

Yours,

Vincent.

If you intend to come soon I will not send the drawings.

But it is time that you receive some of my things now and then, I do my best and if these two for instance please you, I will send you some more of different kinds.

If you show those you think fit to people who happen to come to your room, that may be the beginning of selling them, and when there are more and different ones together by the same hand, they show to better advantage, and the one explains and completes the other.

The thing I value most is your sympathy. If I might win that, the selling will follow.

But that sympathy of yours cannot be forced by either you or me. I think I can produce a great deal, I mean I can work quickly, without dawdling, and after you returned the old studies as I asked you, I sent you two new ones ("The Avenue of Meerdervoort" and "Sorrow"), as a proof that I can make more, if you like them. If you say it is not ripe yet, I will work on without sending them, for what I sent was not made by chance, but I can do what I can.

To do better work I shall have to study for some time. But what I want to say is: if the last ones I have sent you are good enough for you to begin to show, then I can begin to send what I have finished.

What you thought the best, ought to be mounted in grey and so by degrees you will get a small collection. Think it over. I have some more drawings, an old man by the hearth, an old woman of the Geest, a few female figures, that added to the others would do well, I think. Also more small sketches.

I do not say it to hurry you, but it will do no harm to think it over. You began to help me not knowing the result, and when others refused their help.

I should be glad if the result were, that you could say quite coolly to those who think it foolish of you to help me, that you have not lost by it. And that stimulates me to work still harder, and I think you must begin to take a few drawings, and every month I will send some more. There are days that I make five of them, but one has to count that out of twenty drawings one is successful.

But that one of the twenty is not merely by chance, but I can count on it. There will be one every week, which I know "to be right."

It is better that you keep those "that are right" for the present than that I sell them for fr. 10 to somebody here, who takes them for the sake of pity or charity. Here they all criticize the technique, but they all say the same hackneyed things about the English drawings for instance. Only Weissenbruch said, when I told him: I *see* things like pen drawings, "then you must draw with the pen."

He, Weissenbruch has seen, not the small but the large "Sorrow," and has told me things about it that pleased me. Therefore I dare speak as I do about the large one. I have had no "guidance or teaching" from others to speak of, but I taught myself, and it is no wonder that my technique, considered superficially, differs from that of others. But that is not a reason why my work should remain unsaleable. I feel pretty sure that the large "Sorrow," "The Old Woman of the Geest," the "Old Man," and others, some day will find a purchaser. But it may be that I will still work a little more on them. I have worked on the "Avenue of Meerdervoort," again. Before me lies a drawing of a woman in a black merino dress, of which I know for sure, that if you had it a few days, you would be quite reconciled with the technique, and not wish it were done differently. I did not understand the English drawings either the first day, but "I gave myself the trouble to become acquainted with them," and have not regretted it.

Adieu, enough for to-day.

196

(Postcard, written in English.) May 2 '82.

To-day I sent you by bookpost a drawing, "*A Root in a dry ground.*" Just let me know what you think of it. "The Roots" is very similar to this one, but I cannot send that one, neither "Sorrow" in this manner on a roller, the drawings being mounted on cardboard. With regard to this one I hammered it off in a single day, having studied the same spot and trees for "The Roots." So it has been done "tout d'un trait" out of doors, and has not even been in my studio.

But the paper has been slightly damaged in two or three places, as I worked through it, please have this seen to at once, else it might get worse. I think it wants a grey mount. Good-bye, I hope to hear from you at your early convenience.

Vincent.

Tuesday evening.

197

Dear Theo, (May 11 '82.)

To-day I sent you some drawings and sketches; what I want to show you first of all, is that what I told you, does not keep me from my work, on the contrary I am literally absorbed in my work and enjoy it, and have good courage.

Now I hope that you will not be angry at my saying so, but I am rather anxious, because you have not answered as yet. I do not believe that you will disapprove of my being with Christine. I do not believe that for that reason, or for the sake of appearances or I do not know what else, you will quite desert me. But can you wonder after what happened with Mauve and Tersteeg, that I sometimes think with a certain melancholy: perhaps *he* will do the same.

At least I am eagerly looking out for a letter from you, but I know that undoubtedly you are very busy and that it is not so very long since you wrote. But perhaps you will experience it yourself sooner or later, when you are with a woman who is with child, that a day seems as a week, and a week longer than a month And

that is the reason why I write you so often these days, as long as I have no answer.

I wrote to you about my intention of taking the house next door, it being more suitable than this one, which seems so easily blown down, etc. But you surely know, don't you, that I do not ask imperatively for anything whatever. I only hope that you will remain to me what you were; I do not think I lowered or dishonoured myself by what I did, though some perhaps will think so. I feel that my work lies in the heart of the people, that I must keep close to the ground, that I must grasp life to the quick, and make progress through many cares and troubles.

I cannot think of any other way and I do not ask to be free from trouble or care, I only hope the latter will not become unbearable, and that need not be as long as I work and may keep the sympathy of people like you. It is in life as in drawing, one must sometimes act quickly and decidedly, attack a thing with energy, trace the outlines as quickly as lightning.

This is not the moment for hesitation or doubt, the hand may not tremble, nor may the eye wander, but must remain fixed on what is before one. And one must be so absorbed in it, that in a short time something is brought on the paper or the canvas, that was not there before, so that afterwards one hardly knows how it has been hammered off. The time of discussing and thinking must precede the decided action. In the *action* itself there is little space for reflection or argument.

To act quickly is the function of a man, and one has to go through many things before one is able to do so. The pilot sometimes succeeds in making use of a storm to make headway, instead of being wrecked by it.

What I wanted to say to you again, is this: I do not have great plans for the future, if for a moment I feel rising within me the desire for a life without care, for *prosperity*, each time I go fondly back to the trouble and the cares, to a life full of hardship, and think: it is better so, I learn more from it, it does not degrade me, this is not the road on which one perishes. I am absorbed in my work and I have confidence enough, that with the help of such as you, as Mauve, as Tersteeg, though this winter we disagreed, I will succeed in earning enough to keep myself, not in luxury, but as one who eats his bread in the sweat of his brow. Christine is

not a hindrance or a trouble to me, but a help. If she were alone she would perhaps succumb; a woman must not be alone in a society and a time like that in which we live, which does not spare the weak but treads them under foot, and drives over a weak woman when she has fallen down.

Therefore because I see so many weak ones trodden down, I greatly doubt the sincerity of much that is called progress and civilization. I do believe in civilization, even in this time, but only in the kind that is founded on real humanity. That which costs human life I think cruel, and I do not respect it. Well, enough of this. If it might be that I could rent the house next door and could have regular weekly wages, that would be delightful. If it cannot be, I will not give up courage and will wait yet awhile. But if it can be I shall be so happy, and it would save much of my strength for the work, which otherwise is absorbed by cares.

You will see there are all kinds of drawings in the portfolio.

Keep whatever you think best of what I send, then you can show them whenever there is a chance. The rest I should like to get back some time or other. If I thought you would come soon, I would of course keep these things until you came. But now it is perhaps well for you to see the things together, and I hope you will see from it, that I do not live idly on your money. Considering it superficially you would perhaps view the affair with Christine quite differently from what it really is.

But when you have read what I told you in this letter, and in the former one, it will be easier for you to understand.

I wish those who mean well by me would understand that my actions proceed from a deep feeling and need for love, that recklessness and pride, and indifference, are not the springs that move the machine, and when I take this step it is a proof of my taking root low in the ground. I do not think I would do well by aiming at a higher station or in trying to change my character. I must have much more experience, I must learn still more, before I shall be ripe, but that is a question of time and perseverance. Adieu, write soon.

If you can send me something, it will certainly not be unwelcome. Believe me with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

If I thought my leaving the Hague would please anyone I would do so, and go no matter where, rather than be in anybody's way.

But I do no harm to anybody, and after what you wrote me I suppose I must not take too seriously what Tersteeg said.

The house about which I wrote you is to let now, and I am afraid someone else will take it if I do not do so soon. That is another reason why I am looking out for your letter. For you will understand that after what happened with Mauve and Tersteeg, and after what I told you about Christine, I must ask you frankly: Theo, do these things make a change or separation between you and me? If it does not, I would be so happy, and will be twice as glad for your help and sympathy as before, if it does, it is better for me to know the worst than to be kept in suspense.

I like to look things in the face, whether adversity or prosperity. I have got your answer on the question Mauve and Tersteeg, not on the other one. That is something quite apart, there is a barrier between the artistic and the personal matters, but it is well to settle beforehand how we look at those things.

And therefore I say to you:

Theo, I intend to marry this woman, to whom I am attached and who is attached to me. If unfortunately this should bring about a change in your feeling towards me I hope you will not withdraw your help without giving me warning some time before, and that you will always tell me frankly and openly what you think. Of course I hope that your help and sympathy will be in no way withdrawn, but that we shall continue to grasp each other's hand, notwithstanding things which the "world" opposes. So brother if you have not written yet when you receive this letter, answer me by return of post, for after the things I wrote to you, I must be reassured or must know the worst. Adieu, I hope the sky will remain clear between you and me.

198

Dear Theo,

Having received your letter of the 13th of May, which must have crossed one of my letters, I think it necessary to explain a few things to you at once.

I certainly greatly appreciate many things in your letter, for instance: "one must be narrow-minded or prejudiced to give absolute preference to one rank over another."

But the world does not argue thus, and does not see or respect "humanity" in man, but only his greater or smaller value in money or possessions, which he carries with him only as long as he is on this side of the grave. The other side of the grave is not taken into any consideration by the world. Therefore the world only goes as far as its feet can carry it.

On the contrary, I for myself have sympathy and antipathy for men as men, and their surroundings leave me rather indifferent.

But at any rate to a certain extent (if my circumstances allowed me to do so, I would yield in still more points), I take into account what you say: "there are many who keep up a certain appearance so as not to attract too much attention from others, and to avoid having people meddle in their affairs." I mean: very often I let things go, thinking I will not do this or that, so as not to give offence to anyone.

But in really serious things one must not act according to public opinion, nor according to one's own passions. One must keep to the A B C which is the foundation of every morality: "love thy neighbour as thyself," act so that you can answer for it to God. Do rightly and act loyally. Now I stand face to face with Christine and argue thus to myself: how should I like it, if someone first helped me and then left me in the lurch, would I not then think that the person who acts thus would have done better to let me alone, if he does not finish what he began, he has in truth deceived me. The person who is the father of Christine's first child argued exactly in the same way as your letter Theo, and in my opinion it is quite wrong. He was very kind to her, but did not marry her, even when she was with child by him, for the sake, as he said, of his rank and his family, etc. Christine was young then, and had met him after her father's death. She did not know what she knows now, and when he died, there she was all alone with her child, stranded without a penny. She had to walk the streets à contre cœur, fell ill, was brought to a hospital, all kinds of miseries. . . .

That man's behaviour was guilty before God, but in the eyes of

the world he was excused—"he had paid her." But in the face of *death*, do you not think he must have felt regret and repentance??

Now it is so in the world that in opposition to characters of such persons as he, there are characters like mine for instance. I care as little for what the world says as that man cared for what was right. To appear right was enough for him; as for me I do not care a penny for the world's opinion. What I think the most important is *not to deceive or desert a woman.* If a woman refuses to have anything to do with me, like K., I do not try to force her, though my love may be ever so strong, I leave her with desolation in my heart, as soon as to my "she, and no other," she opposes her "he, certainly not."

I will not force and I will not desert. I protest also when they force or desert me.

If I were married to a woman and I saw that this woman deceived me with another man, I would not give in so easily, but would only leave her when the utmost had been tried to bring her back to me.

So you see what my opinion is about marriage, and that I take it seriously. Now I have met Christine, as you know she was pregnant, ill, in the cold; I was alone, I had just had the experience in Amsterdam I wrote you about. I took to her, though not at once with the idea of marriage, but when I learned to know her better, it became clear to me that if I wanted to help her I had to do it seriously.

Then I spoke frankly to her and said: "so and so are my opinions on things, in this and this way I understand your position and mine. I am poor but I am no seducer, do you think you can put up with me, otherwise it ends now." Then she said: "I will stay with you, though you be ever so poor." And this is the way it has happened thus far.

And now after a short time she will go to Leyden, and when she comes back I should like to marry her without any fuss. Because otherwise there is something crooked in her position and mine, which I decidedly want to avoid.

I am then like a workman, who has a handicraft in which she helps me. My drawings are in your hands, and during the first year at least my bread and hers depends on you, and on all those who will help me, because you see that I do my best to work, and

that some power of drawing—and I think painting also,—is in me, and will show itself by and by.

Now I think, Theo, that I do not shame my family by doing what I did, and I wish my family would take it quietly. Otherwise we stand opposed to each other and I say in my turn: not for anybody's sake will I desert a woman to whom I am attached by a bond that is made by mutual help and respect. That will never be said of me, and you will see now that it is no "obstinacy" or "wanting to follow my own way."

I accept her past and she accepts my past. If my family disowned me because I had seduced a woman, I would feel like a criminal if I had really done so, but if I should be disowned for having remained faithful to a woman, to whom I had pledged my troth, I would despise my family. Not everybody is fit to be a *painter's* wife, *she is willing*, she learns every day.

Some peculiarities in her character that have disgusted other people, I understand. But Tersteeg would perhaps think of her what he thinks of me, and would say: she has a disagreeable character, and she is very unattractive and that would be all.

But of course I have enough knowledge of the world and of human beings to desire no more than that nobody will oppose my marriage, and I hope my daily bread will not be lacking as long as I prove that I do my best, and force my way to become a good painter, or perhaps only a draughtsman. But I shall not visit my family or do anything of the kind, either alone or with her, but I will remain in this sphere to which my work has assigned me. And then nobody can take offence, unless some mischief makers would try deliberately to put a stumbling block in my path, which I hope will not be the case.

But you will find me very compliant in anything I can do without becoming unfaithful to Christine. I shall be very glad to hear your opinion for instance in the matter of where I shall live, or such things. If there is any objection to my staying in the Hague, I am not bound to stay in the Hague. And I can find a field of action wherever you like, either in a village or in a city. The figures and the landscape which chance may put before me, will always be interesting enough for me to try my best to draw them, so you can safely give your opinion on that question. But of course it must not be a kind of guardianship, that would be quite

out of place. But the question of remaining true to Christine is one about which I feel, "*I may not break a marriage promise.*"

If K. had listened to me last summer, perhaps she would not have dismissed me so abruptly in Amsterdam, and then things would have gone quite differently. But you know how, though I followed her to the end, though I pursued her as far as Amsterdam, I could not get her to speak to me or to give me any hope,—to which I could hold on. Now the rush of life pushes and urges me on, and the work, and the seeing and finding of new things, which I must grasp resolutely if I want to get the upper hand in the fierce struggle.

Passive waiting belongs to former years. What I do now, since I found my work and profession, is to act and keep wideawake.

So I think your letter is in the main quite wrong, but it is perhaps because you have not thought it over well. You say that what happened between Christine and me does not necessitate my marrying her. This is how Christine and I think about it: we both long for home life, close together, and we need each other daily in our work and are daily together. We do not want anything crooked in our position, and think marriage the only radical way to quiet the gossip, and to prevent their reproaching us that we live illegally. If we do *not* marry, people can say there is something wrong,—if we do marry, we are very poor and give up all pretence of social standing, but our action is straight and honest. I think you will understand this.

If it is possible that I receive this year fr. 150 a month (though my work is not saleable at present, but is the foundation on which I can build) then I undertake the thing with much animation and good courage, because then at least I know: I shall not lack the strictly necessary for work: daily bread, a house, drawing materials; I shall be able to work. If I know for certain that you withdraw your help, then I am powerless, notwithstanding all my good will my hand is paralysed, yes then it is misery all round, then it is terrible. What satisfaction would it give you or anyone else; I would get discouraged, it would go hard with Christine and the child. Perhaps you think it exaggerated that I suppose you able to do such a thing, but: "*such things happen.*" *If this terrible lot must befall me,—be it so.*

Adieu, brother, before you strike the blow and cut off my head

(and that of Christine, and the child also) sleep on it once more. I repeat, if it must be so "*off with my head*," but rather not, I need it so much for drawing.

Vincent.

199

Dear Theo,

Because Christine suffered from cramps, etc., I thought it would be well for her to go once more to Leyden to find out exactly how things are. She has been there and has come back already, thank God she is all right, but as you know in March she had an operation, and has now again been examined. She needs care and must continue to have strengthening food and also some more baths if possible, but there are no complications, and there is every chance she will get through it.

In March the professor could not tell exactly when her confinement would be, but he thought it would be the end of May or the beginning of June. Now he says it will be late in June probably, and has changed her admission ticket to the hospital for the middle of June. This time he asked her many questions about whom she was living with and from what he said about it I know now for sure what I had guessed, that she would die if she had to walk the street again, and when I met her this winter it was but just in time to give her the needed help.

So, as I wrote you, I do not think of leaving her, for under the circumstances that would be a mean trick.

The doctor found her better than in March, the child lives and he has given her some instructions about food, etc., so that I do not act in the dark.

The baby's clothes are also ready, of course the very simplest. I am not living in an air-castle or in a dream but in plain reality where one must act with firmness.

Under the circumstances I know no better way for either of us than that I should marry her. As I wrote to you the kind tone of your letter of the 13th of May was more than I expected. I had no illusions and expected that you would quite disapprove of my behaviour and would withdraw your help. And even now I hardly dare

hope that your help will continue, because I know that in the eyes of most people in your position such an act is considered as a capital crime which is punished by a sort of banishment. So I am longing very much for your next letter also to hear if you have received the drawings. But I have no illusions about it. Only I would not act sincerely if I said to you otherwise than it is my decided intention to marry her as soon as possible. The reasons you give are not so strong as to make me give it up, though in some of your remarks especially when considered apart there is a great deal of truth. And now to tell you the truth I really need some more money this month though I paid for the bread until the first of June, and laid up some provisions of coffee, etc.

Of course when you tell me there is nothing wrong with it as I thought there was, I will certainly finish the order for C. M. and I have already made the studies for it. However it will take me about three weeks to finish those six drawings, for in order to get six good ones I shall have to make more than six besides the work I have already done. I do not know how much I shall get for them, but I will do my best, so I hope I shall get the money in June.

If there is after all some good in my behaviour towards Christine this is more to *your* credit than *mine*, as I was and am only the instrument, as without your help I would have been powerless.

The money sent by you has helped me on with my drawing, and moveover it has saved the life of Christine and the child until now. But in a certain sense I am guilty if you should take it as a breach of confidence, but I hope you will not do so.

Yours,

Vincent.

200

Dear Theo,

Just a word in haste. Did you receive the drawings and my last letter? I mean the portfolio containing the large "Sorrow" and "The Roots," etc. I hear that Uncle Vincent is in Paris, I hope you did not speak to him about the affair in question. Of course they would consider it "immoral" or something worse still.

All right, if I only need not listen to it, or need not be present, they can chatter about it as much as they like. Yesterday I received a kind letter from father and mother which would please me very much if I could only believe that this feeling would continue.

But when I speak to them about the affair with Christine (which I shall certainly do after three weeks, when she has gone to Leyden, and I have the time to spare, but not before), then I repeat, will they still speak kindly when they know all this???

But my marriage does not depend on them, and you know well enough what I think about the question, and that as I do nothing that is unlawful, and as I doubt their competence in judging moral affairs, their refusal would certainly grieve me, but it would not stop or hinder me.

I am again busy with the drawings for C. M. But will they please him? Perhaps not. I can conceive such drawings only as studies in perspective and I make them especially for practice in that exercise.

Even if he does not take them I shall not be sorry for the trouble they gave me because I would like to keep them myself, and because I practise the subjects on which so much depends: perspective and proportion.

During the last fortnight I have been weak, not feeling well at all, I would not give in to it and have gone on with my work. But, for instance, for several nights I have not been able to sleep and have been feverish and nervous. But I force myself to keep going and at work, for this is not the time to fall ill. I must go on; Christine and her mother moved to a smaller house, because when Christine returns from Leyden she will come to live with me wherever I may be, either in better or in worse circumstances. It is a little house with a courtyard of which I hope to make a drawing this week.

Every day I see more clearly that the step I take opens an interesting field for drawing and getting models.

That must also be taken into account in judging me. My profession allows me to undertake this marriage which I could not do if I had another position.

I am longing for your letter and hope you will soon find time to write. I think knowing how things are you could do much to straighten matters in this (and if you want more information I will

give it to you gladly and honestly) knowing, I repeat, how things are, you will be able to moderate and change the opinions of those who have but a very imperfect notion of the matter, and so disagreements will be avoided. For you understand I want to avoid as much as possible all disagreement, gossip and quarrels, and it is for the sake of peace that I spoke to no one but you about it, and shall not do so, more than is absolutely necessary, as, for instance, to father when the time has come that Christine is in Leyden.

This is not a thing that I have sought, but it has come across my path and I have seized it, and I am glad that it is a thing that demands action without hesitation or reflection. And I show it to you first from its darkest side so you will know the worst now.

But I wish I knew what to do about the studio I wrote you of. I would be content with a smaller house, but I do not know one more suitable or fit. And I am afraid that a less suitable one would not be cheaper because then my work would suffer, though I would spare a few guilders a month by paying less rent. And perhaps I should say afterwards, why did I let that studio go, why did I not try harder to get it?

More than for your letter I long for your coming, but I understand I shall perhaps have to wait some time still. I am not in a mood for writing, but one must do it sometimes. It would be well if you could send me something for I am rather hard up. Well, at all events write soon. I should like to know especially your opinion about the studio. It may be gone any day. Adieu, I repeat do not deprive yourself but if possible send me something.

Vincent.

And let me know if you have received the drawings.

201*

Dear Theo,

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I do wish you knew Sien, but you are so far away, and it is impossible for me to describe a person so that you would know her well only from that description. However I can try.

Do you remember our old nurse at Zundert, Leen Veerman?

* The first few lines of this letter are missing.

Sien is that kind of person if I remember well. Her type of profile resembles the "L'Ange de la Passion," by Landelle, you know what I mean, a kneeling figure, the print is published by Goupil. But of course she is not exactly like this, I say it only to give you an idea of the lines of her face. She is slightly pox-marked, so she is not beautiful any longer, but the lines of her figure are simple and not ungraceful.

What I appreciate in her is, that she is not coquettish with me, goes her way quietly, is saving, has much goodwill in adapting herself to the circumstances and is willing to learn, so that in a thousand ways she can help me with my work. And that she is no longer handsome, no longer young, no longer coquettish, no longer foolish, that is just the reason she is useful to me. Her health has been very bad, and this winter she was very weak. Now by eating simple food, by walking much in the open air, and by taking baths, she has become much healthier and stronger. But the time of pregnancy is a difficult one. However, her speech is ugly and she often says things and uses expressions that, for instance, our sister Willmien, who has been brought up differently would never use. But that is a thing that I do not mind in the least. I would rather have her speak badly and be good than refined in speech and heartless. But that is just it, she has a good heart, has endurance, patience and goodwill, puts herself out to help me. She comes every week to clean the studio to save the money I would have to pay a scrub woman. Well, we shall be poor at times, but if she has only enough to eat she is not sickly in the sense of having some ailment, but she has suffered much, for instance with small-pox and quinsy.

But that is no reason why she cannot live long and become quite well again.

I must put a question to you in confidence. Do you think that father is afraid that I shall ask him for money on this occasion? I would certainly not do so. Father has often told me that my education, etc., has cost more than that of the others, therefore I would not in case of my marriage ask father for anything, not even for an old cup and saucer? Sien and I have the strictly necessary. The only thing we cannot do without as long as I do not sell my work is the fr. 150 from you, for house rent, bread, shoes, drawing materials, in short the daily expenses.

I ask nothing not even an old cup and saucer, *I ask but one single thing, to let me love and care for my poor, weak, ill-used little wife as well as my poverty allows me, without their trying to separate to hinder or to hurt us.*

Nobody cared for her or wanted her, she was alone and forsaken like a worthless rag, and I have taken her up and have given her all the love, all the tenderness, all the care that was in me, she has felt that, and she has revived or rather she is reviving. You know the old fable or parable: there was a poor man in a town who had only one single little ewe lamb that he had bought and fed, and it had been raised in his house,—it ate of his bread and drank from his cup, and slept in his arms, and it was to him as a daughter.

There was also a rich man in that city who possessed many herds of sheep and oxen, but he took from the poor man that one ewe lamb and killed it. You see if Tersteeg, for instance, could do what he liked he would separate Sien from me, force her back in her former damned life which she has always hated, and why?

Know it well, the life of the woman, of the children, of me, depends on that little thread of the fr. 150 a month, until my work begins to sell. If that little thread breaks before that time, then: "morituri te salutant." That is the least we can manage with, and we can only do that with the greatest economy. But we are happy in this because love binds us so closely

Whether father and mother take it quietly or not will depend three-fourths on what you tell them. If you oppose me then the trouble begins. If you say something like: keep calm; do not meddle, or if you try to reassure them in some way, they will keep quiet. You need not compromise yourself, however, or take any responsibility. In no way, for that responsibility rests with me, but if you remain to me what you have been until now, you can reassure them in two ways about the financial side. First, that for the necessary expenses I have your monthly allowance, secondly, that I do not ask anything from them, not a penny, not even an old cup and saucer. Finally, that I have already the strictly necessary, furniture, bedding, child's clothes, cradle, etc.

Well, brother I hope all "dramatic" scenes will be avoided, and that we may all keep calm, that is what I hope for and strive after.

Dear Theo, 27 May '82.

To-day, Saturday, I had a visit from Rappard, and I am glad he has been here. He asked after you many times. He saw among others the drawings which I am making for C. M. and they seemed to please him, especially a large one of that yard where Sien's mother lives. I wish you could see that too,as well as another of a carpenter's shop and yard where little figures are busy. It is a great deal more complicated as to the perspective than the "Meerdervoort Avenue" that I sent you, and it has given me trouble enough. You must know that at present I am working out of doors as early as four o'clock in the morning, as in the day time it is too difficult to work on the street because of the passers-by and the street urchins; that is also the finest moment to see the great lines when everything is in tone.

But, brother, it has been a hard fortnight for me. When I wrote to you about the middle of May I had only fr. 3 or fr. 3.50 left after I had paid the baker; and I have had hardly anything to eat but dried black bread with some coffee, and Sien also. Because we had bought some things for the baby and she had been to Leyden, etc.

Now the first of June I have to pay the house rent and I have nothing, literally nothing. I hope you will send something.

A week ago I felt very faint from continuous sleeplessness. Now that I have had some luck with a few drawings and the order of C. M. is almost finished, I have new courage and am a little calmer.

But, brother, do write to me soon and deliver me from the landlord, for you know he will not be put off.

Rappard's visit has cheered me up; he seems to work very hard.

I have received fr. 2.50 from him because he saw a tear in one of the drawings and he said: you must have that repaired. That is true I said, but I have not the money, and the drawing must be sent off. Then he readily said that he would be pleased to give it me, and he would have given still more but I would not take it, and gave him a whole lot of woodcuts and a drawing in exchange. It was one for C. M., so as it was the best of them all the money to have it repaired was very welcome. That same drawing will

perhaps be sold afterwards for fr. 50 or so, and I did not have the money to have a tear in it repaired. Well, I do hope, brother, that you do not think evil of Sien and me, she has learned to put up with my disagreeable side, and she understands me in many things better than others. She is so willing to help me in everything that I cannot tell you how useful she is to me. If I get into a passion either about the posing or something else she knows how to take it, and has seen that it soon passes. In the same way when I worry or trouble about something that does not succeed, she often knows how to quiet me, and that is what I am not able to do for myself.

And she is very saving, and accepts a piece of black bread without complaining.

And I do the same, if we can only make both ends meet.

I hope you have received the drawings I sent I think about the 10th of May. There were twenty-five of them in a portfolio, I have not heard from you about them.

I do wish there were a few other people for whom I could make something on the same conditions as I am doing for C. M.

And especially that C. M. continues to order, for these drawings are much better than the first, and by and by I shall make them better still. And at that price he certainly does not get a bad bargain.

You know how it is, if you do not forsake me because of Sien, then I am full of courage. And at four in the morning I am already at my work, so with a little sympathy from those who know me I shall get through it. I am longing for your letter, a handshake in thought, but do write soon and deliver me from the landlord.

Yours,

Vincent.

203

(Postcard, written in English.)

My dear brother,

To-day or to-morrow being the 1st of June I promised to pay my landlord fr. 5 rent of studio for the month of April + fr. 7.50 for last month, makes fr. 12.50.

But not having up to now received any letter of yours since that of May 12th, I have nothing to pay him his twelve guilders and 50 c. with. The man will surely not give me any longer delay, but they can immediately sell my furniture publicly. Whatever may be your opinion concerning the things I told you do not let it come to this scandal, my drawings for C. M. are ready, but I shall not be able to get that money early enough. I say again, let us at all events avoid irregularity and public scandal, and talk and write calmly on the subject, till we know what ought to be done. Therefore I hope you will send me what I so greatly want, and will write. I work day and night, and have a small drawing ready for you, which I will send by and by. I have no money for a stamp, excuse the postcard, and believe me,

Yours truly,

Vincent.

204

Dear Theo, June 1st.

I received your letter with its enclosure and paid the landlord at once. As there is a mortgage on the house the rent is collected by another man, who last month turned some people out, and made short work of them. What you say about dividing the month in thirds, so that I might receive the money on the 1st, and 10th and the 20th was very welcome to me, it will be much easier for me.

I need not tell you what a relief your letter was.

Did you receive the drawing, "The Fish Drying Barn"? I am busy making a few more of them, so that you will have about three done in the same way.

C. M. has also some done in this way, but I have not heard from him.

. . . . . .

Now I am glad that you told me frankly what your thoughts were about Sien, viz. that she intrigues, and I let myself be fooled by her. And I can understand that you would suppose such a thing because such things happen. However, I remember once, when a girl tried to do such a thing, having shut the door in her face so abruptly that I doubt whether I could so easily become the

victim of a common intrigue. The case with Sien is that I am really attached to her, and she to me, she has become a faithful help who follows me everywhere, and becomes more indispensable every day.

My feeling for her is less passionate than what I felt for K. last year, but a love like that for Sien is the only thing I am still capable of, after having been disappointed in that first love. She and I are two unhappy ones who keep together and carry our burdens together, and in this way unhappiness is changed to joy, and the unbearable becomes bearable. Her mother is a little old woman exactly like Frère paints them. Now you understand quite well that I would not care much for the formality of marriage, if the family did not care for it, if I only remained faithful to her. But father I know for sure attaches great importance to this, and though he will not approve of my marrying her, he would think it still worse if I lived with her without being married. His advice would be to leave her, and this advice he would give in this form: *Wait*, which is only weakness, and that is entirely out of season. I am a man of thirty with wrinkles in my forehead and lines in my face as though I were forty, and my hands are deeply furrowed, but father looks at me through his spectacles as if I were a little boy. (Only a year and a half ago father wrote to me: "you are in your first youth.")

Now you will say: Vincent, you had better think of the perspective and the "Fish Drying Barn." And then I answer: you are right dear brother, and therefore I am going to work on the two drawings that belong to the first one, and that you will soon receive as a proof that I like nothing better than to be absorbed in things of nature and art, without thinking of such ridiculous things as being put under guardianship.

Adieu, my hearty thanks for your faithful help.

Yours,

Vincent.

P.S.—I kept this letter because I wanted to send you the little drawings at the same time, but they are not quite finished yet. But one is, viz. another "Fish Drying Barn." Sien and I have been camping in the dunes from morn until night for days in succession as real Bohemians. We took bread with us, and a little bag of

coffee and got some hot water from a woman in a little shop at Scheveningen.

That woman and her little shop are splendid, picturesque beyond description. I have visited her little shop as early as five in the morning when the street cleaners go there for their coffee. That would be a fine thing to draw, boy!!! But to get all those people to pose would cost a great deal of money, but I should love to do it. Write to me some time, especially what you think of these three last drawings.

I think it a delightful prospect that you will soon come. I quite long to know what impression Sien will make on you. There is nothing striking about her, she is just an ordinary woman of the people, who for me has something sublime; whoever loves one ordinary commonplace person and is loved by her is already happy, notwithstanding the dark side of life. If she had not needed help this winter the bond between us would not have been made after my disappointment and jilted love. But now, however, it was the feeling of being after all of some use in spite of that disappointment that brought me to myself again, and made me revive. I did not seek for it, but it found me, and now the fact is that there is a warm affection between us, and it would not be right for me to give her up. I would perhaps have become indifferent and sceptical if I had not met Sien, but my work and she keep me active. And one thing more I must add, because Sien puts up with all the troubles and worries of a painter's life, and is so willing to pose I think I shall become a better artist with her than if I had married K. Sien is not so graceful and has perhaps or rather certainly quite different manners, but she has such a good will and devotion that I am touched by it.

Now Heyerdahl has seen "Sorrow," but I should like to have a draughtsman, for instance, Henri Pille, see those last three drawings. H. Pille certainly does not remember me though I have been in his company, and I know he is somebody who is very queer in his manners, and I do not know whether he would say anything. But I should only like to know if the drawings made any impression upon him, and if they would have his sympathy. I say this in case you happen to meet Henri Pille now and then, for it must be by chance as it were that you show them.

I must also tell you that I am getting on so well with my

collection of woodcuts which I consider as belonging to you, I only having the use of them. I have now about a thousand pages, English (especially Swain's), American and French ones. And Rappard for instance who is also collecting them now, greatly admired them, so that is something which belongs to you though you do not know it. I only regret that I could not buy Doré's "London" lately for which the Jew asked fr. 7.50, but I could not afford it, and also an Album Boetzel. Well, when you come here you will have a look at them, and I hope you will like them. Perhaps it will acquaint you with some artists of whom before you knew little or nothing.

Vincent.

205

Dear Theo,

To-day, Saturday I send to you those two drawings: "Fish Drying Barn" in the dunes at Scheveningen, and "Carpenter's Workshop and a Laundry" (seen from my studio window).

I have been thinking of you very often lately, and also of that time long ago when as you remember you visited me once at the Hague, and we walked together along the Ryswyk road and drank milk at that mill.[1] It may be this has influenced me somehow when making these drawings, in which I have tried to draw the things as naïvely as possible, exactly as I saw them before me. Looking back on those days of the mill how sympathetic that time always seems to me, it would have been impossible for me however to put on paper what I saw and felt. So I say that the changes which time brings do not alter my feelings at heart, but I think they are only developed in another form. My life, and perhaps after all yours too, is not as sunny now as it was then, but I would not go back, because through that very trouble and adversity I have seen some good arise, viz. to give expression to that feeling. Rappard was greatly pleased with a similar drawing which C. M. has, and also with all the others I drew for C. M., especially the large one of the little yard. And he is somebody who understands my intentions, and who appreciates all the difficulties. I think you

[1] See Letter 10.

would find Rappard greatly changed since his first visit to Paris when you knew him.

There lies before me a volume, a household edition with illustrations, by Dickens. Those illustrations are splendid, they are drawn by Barnard and Fildes.

There are some parts of old London in it which through the peculiar wood engraving have quite a different aspect than, for instance, the " Carpenter's Shop." But I believe that the way to acquire that strength and power is to continue quietly to observe faithfully. As you see there are already several planes on this drawing, and one can look around it and through it, in every corner and hole. What is still lacking is the vigour—at least it does not by far possess that quality as much as those illustrations do, but that will come by and by. I have had news from C. M. in the form of a postal order for fr. 20, but without one written word. So I do not know as yet whether he will give me a new order or whether the drawings are to his liking. But in comparison with the price paid for the first one, fr. 30, and taking into consideration that this last package (the first contained 12 little ones, this one contained one small one; 4 like those I now send you; 2 large ones; so in all 7 pieces) was more important than the first, it seems to me that C. M. was not in a good mood when he received them, or for some reason or other they did not please him. I will readily admit that to an eye that is used exclusively for water-colours there must be something crude in drawings in which one has scratched with a pen and lights have been rubbed out or put in again with body colour. But there are people who are not afraid of that crudeness as there are people who think it sometimes pleasant and invigorating for a healthy man to take a walk during a storm.

Weissenbruch for instance would not think these two drawings unpleasant or uninteresting.

As things are I should like to know whether C. M. would care to order new ones, of course I will not or cannot force them upon him, but I hope that you, when you come here, will find out how things stand.

Of course I am content with fr. 20, the more so because I left it with him to fix the price, but I had thought that he would not give me fr. 10 less for these than for the former. If he approves of

my beginning another 6 or 12 drawings for him I will certainly do so, because I shall not let any opportunity pass by to sell something.

I will try my best to please him, for if it only pays my rent and makes things somewhat easier for me, it is worth while. But he himself had spoken of paying rather more and not less for more elaborate drawings. And when I speak about it, it is after all because I want to know what to do in case of a possible new order or no order at all. It may also be that he will write himself about it later.

One of these days when I have time I will send you a little list of my collection of woodcuts. I am sure you will like them. If it is true that I had this winter less expenses for paint than other artists, I have had *more* expenses for the making of an instrument for studying proportion and perspective, the description of which is found in a book by Albert Dürer, and which the old Dutch masters also used. It makes it possible to compare the proportion of objects near by with those on a more distant plane, in cases where construction according to the rules of perspective is not possible.

And when one tries to do it *with the eye alone*,—unless one is an expert and very far advanced it is always decidedly wrong.

I did not succeed in making that instrument at once, but at last after many efforts, with the help of the carpenter and the smithy I managed it. And after more efforts I see a chance of getting still better results. I should be very pleased if there were in your wardrobe perhaps a coat and pair of trousers fit for me that had been discarded by you.

For when I buy something I do my best to get things as practical as possible for working in the dunes or at home, but my street clothes are getting very shabby. And though I do not feel ashamed to go out in common clothes when I go to work, I feel ashamed indeed of gentlemen's clothes that have a shabby genteel air. But my working clothes are not untidy at all, just because I have Sien to take care of them, and to make the necessary little repairs. I finish this letter by repeating that I hope so much the family will not regard my relation with Sien as an intrigue, as it is not that at all. This would disgust me beyond words and raise the barrier still higher between us. What I hope is that people with a certain untimely wisdom will not meddle in order to prevent my living

with her. You spoke in one word about speculating on a heritage, but that is quite out of the question, for the reason that there is nothing for me to inherit that I know of. There cannot be anything I think, for there *is* nothing, in my opinion there is at home literally *no* money. The only person from whom in quite different circumstances I could have inherited, because I am named after him—Uncle Vincent—is somebody with whom I have been on decidedly bad terms for years, for various reasons, and in such a way that it cannot be redressed as if I were his protégé, because I certainly would not wish it, and of course he does not think of such a thing at all, though I hope that if we meet by chance like we did last year we shall not have a public quarrel. And now with a handshake.

Yours,

Vincent.

WOODCUTS.

1 Portfolio Irish types, miners, factories, fishers, etc., small pen sketches, most of them.

1 ,, Landscapes and animals, Bodmer, Giacomelli, Lançon, and some particular landscapes.

1 ,, "Travaux des Champs" by Millet, further Breton, Boughton, Clausen, etc.

1 ,, Lançon.

1 ,, Gavarni, completed with lithographs, but no rare ones.

1 ,, Ed. Morin.

1 ,, G. Doré.

1 ,, du Maurier, very numerous
1 ,, Ch. Keene & Sambourne
1 ,, J. Tenniel, completed with the Beaconsfield cartoons
} Draughtsmen for "Punch."

Here John Leech is wanting, but this lack is easily made up, as reproductions of his woodcuts are for sale, and are not expensive.

1 ,, Barnard.

1 ,, Fildes & Charles Green, etc.

1 ,, Small French woodcut, Album Boetzel, etc.

1 ,, Scenes on board English ships and military sketches.

1 Portfolio "Heads of the People" by Herkomer, completed by drawings of others and by portraits.

1 ,, Sketches of London, life types of the people, from the opium smokers and Whitechapel and The Seven Dials, to the most elegant ladies' figures and Rotten Row or Westminster Park. To this are added similar scenes from Paris and New York, so the whole is a curious "Tale of those cities."

1 ,, The large pages of "Graphic," "London News," "Harper's Weekly," "Illustration," etc., among which are Frank Holl, Herkomer, Fred Walker, P. Renouard, Menzel, Howard Pyle.

1 ,, The "Graphic" portfolio which is a separate edition of reproductions from the blocks themselves, of some woodcuts, among which is "The Homeless and Hungry" by Fildes. Some illustrated books, among which are "Dickens'" and "Frederick the Great" by Menzel, small edition.

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City Hospital (4 class ward 6 No. 9)

Dear Theo, Brouwersgracht.

When you come perhaps towards the end of June you will find me at work again I hope, but for the time being I am at the hospital, where I shall stay only a fortnight however. Already for three weeks I have suffered from insomnia and low fever, and bladder trouble.

So I have to stay quietly in bed here, must swallow many quinine pills, and also have injections now and then, either of pure water or with alum water, so it is as harmless as can be. Therefore you need not worry at all about it. But you know one must not neglect such things, and should have them attended to at once, because neglect would aggravate it. Breitner is still here though in another ward and perhaps he leaves soon; he does not know I am here. You will do me a favour by not speaking about it, for people sometimes exaggerate so, and things are enlarged upon by gossip, only to you I tell exactly what it is, and you need not keep it a secret if anyone

might ask you directly, and at all events you need not make yourself anxious about it.

Of course I had to pay a fortnight in advance, fr. 10.50 for all expenses. Between the persons who are free patients and those who pay fr. 10.50 there is no difference as to food or treatment, there are ten patients in a ward, and I must tell you that the treatment is very good in all respects. I do not feel bored at all, and the rest and the thorough practical medical treatment do me good.

If it is convenient to you be so kind as to send fr. 50 about the 20th of June to the above-mentioned address, but *not* by registered mail. You know that on the 1st of June I received fr. 100. So then I am safe no matter what happens. If I have to stay longer I will pay once more and do so, and if not I have money to start my work again.

Sien comes to see me on visiting days and keeps an eye on the studio. Now you must know that the day before I came here I received a letter from C. M. in which he writes a whole lot about the "interest" he feels for me, and which he says Mr. Tersteeg has also shown me, but he did not approve of my having been so ungrateful to Tersteeg for his interest. It may be so. I am lying here calmly and quietly enough, but I can tell you, Theo, that I should certainly lose my temper if some person or other came to see me again with the kind of interest which Tersteeg showed me on certain occasions. And when I think how he pushed his interest so far as to dare to compare me with an opium smoker, then I am still astonished that I on my part did not show him my interest in the form of "damn you." I did not answer C. M.'s last letter, neither shall I do so. However, his saying that he will buy from me again some time out of interest, I appreciate, especially when he means it, which will show for itself. A letter from you of course would make me very happy these days. Sien is preparing to go to Leyden.

I think of her often,—I am expecting her now, I hope she will pull through safely.

I have fought against my being ill as long as I could and continued to work, but at last I felt it was urgent to consult a doctor. But this morning he again told me that I would soon be better.

Did you receive the two little drawings?

Adieu, a handshake, and wishing you as much prosperity as a man can stand.

Yours,

Vincent

207

Dear Theo,

Few things have given me so much pleasure lately as hearing from home, things that set my mind at ease about their feelings towards me. Sien came to tell me that a parcel had been delivered at the studio, and I told her to go and open it and see what was in it, in case of a letter, to bring that with her; so I learned that they have sent a whole package of things, underwear and outer clothing, and cigars, and in the letter was also enclosed fr. 10. I cannot tell you how it touched me, it is much more than I expected, but they do not know everything as yet.

I am but weak and feeble, Theo, and I need absolute, absolute rest in order to recover, so everything that makes for peace is welcome. But before I was lying here I felt much worse than now, and you must well know that it is not serious at all and needs only a short time of treatment to make me well again. I wanted to tell you immediately the news from father and mother because I thought that would please you too.

Sien probably goes next Monday, for I think now she is better off in the hospital, and about the middle of June she will be admitted there. But she wanted to stay here for me, only I would not allow that.

I have my books on perspective here, and a few volumes of Dickens, among others "Edwin Drood"; in Dickens there is also perspective. Good God! what an artist. There is no one like him.

I hope it will have a good influence on my drawings that I must take a rest, for sometimes one gets a better view of things when one does not work on them for some time, as then when you see them again they seem fresh and new. The view from the window of the ward is splendid: Yards on the canal, with the boats laden with potatoes, rear view of houses that are being pulled down by workmen, part of a garden, and on the next more distant plane the Quay

with its rows of trees and street lamps, a very complicated little court with gardens connected to it, and finally all the roofs. The whole in bird's eye view, but especially in the evenings and in the mornings, through the light effect is mysterious, as for instance a Ruysdael or Van der Meer. But draw it I may not, and cannot as long as I am so weak. But though it is forbidden to get out of bed I cannot restrain myself from getting up to look at it every evening.

Write to me soon; was not that parcel from home a surprise, and just now it made me more than happy.

The rest does me good and makes me so much calmer, and takes away that nervousness that has troubled me so much of late. And here in the ward it is not less interesting to me than in the third-class waiting-room. But I may not and cannot draw as yet. Adieu, I hope you will find time to write to me, believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

I thought it so nice that this came from home, that I wanted to let you know at once. Of course I do not need any more clothes now. I wrote home to thank them, and to tell them I was here. You know the address is—City Hospital—4 Class—Ward 6—No. 9. Brouwersgracht.

208

Dear Theo, June 22.

I received your letter of the 12th of June with enclosed fr. 50, and thank you heartily for it. I did not answer you before because I did not know what turn my illness would take, as I did not recover as quickly as the doctor expected. I have been here more than two weeks already, and I have had to pay in advance for the next two weeks, though perhaps if everything goes well I may leave in eight or ten days, but then I shall get part of my money back. Now this morning I spoke with the doctor and asked him if there has been some complication that would make things worse. He said: no,—but rest and a stay in the hospital was necessary. But I can assure you that I long dreadfully to see some green and

for some fresh air, for such an experience as this makes one feel very weak and faint. For I have to lie still most all the time. I cannot draw though I tried it a few times, it makes me too feverish. I can read, but I have no more books. Well, there will come an end to this sooner or later so I must have patience.

Sien is at Leyden, but until she is confined I cannot hear from her. What are the sufferings of us men compared to that terrible pain which women have to bear at child-birth. In patient suffering they are our masters, but on the contrary in some other things we are superior. Until the last day she came to visit me regularly and brought me some smoked beef and sugar or bread, which I have to do without now, and it makes me feel very faint. But now I am so sorry that I in my turn cannot go to Leyden to bring her some extras that she might need, for the food one gets there is not particularly good. It is such a strange feeling for me not to be able to do anything, and see the days pass by so empty. Sometimes I think I shall be able to do this or that, but then the weakness gets the better of me.

I am very glad you were interested in the drawings I sent you. I worked so hard on them and on those for C. M. also, those last days when I had much more pain and oppression than since I have been here. For I felt worse before I came to the hospital, long before.

Now you must know that I have had a letter from Rappard. Of course I had sent him back the fr. 2.50 at once, and then he answered me and repeated what he already said about my drawings in the studio, viz. that he liked them and felt sympathy for them, because of their style and sentiment and character, and he suggested that if I had some more like them I should send them to him as he thought he would be able to find a purchaser. You can imagine that it is what I like best, that people feel some sympathy for my work, that does me so much good. For it is so discouraging and depressing and acts like a damper when one never hears: this or that is right, and full of sentiment and character. It is so cheering to perceive that others feel something of that which one has tried to express. Van Rappard also liked a few of the nude studies.

For the first time in several days I am sitting up again, and while writing I feel something revive in me. If I were only well again! If I could only work here how I should love to make some studies in

the wards. I am now lying in another ward with beds or cots without curtains, and especially in the evening or in the night there are peculiar light effects. The doctor is exactly as I would wish, he looks like some heads of Rembrandt, a splendid forehead and a very sympathetic expression. I hope to have learned from him to this extent, that in future I shall try to handle my models like he does his patients, viz. by getting a firm hold on them and putting them straightway in the necessary position. It is astonishing how much patience he has to massage the patients himself, rubbing them with ointment, and handling them in different ways, infinitely better than a nurse does, and how well he knows how to banish their scruples and to place them exactly as he wishes. There is one old man that would have been a superb St. Gerome: a thin, long, sinewy, brown, wrinkled body with such very distinct and expressive joints, that it makes one melancholy not to be able to have him for a model.

I can imagine that Heyerdahl is pleased with such a reward.

I have still to tell you that father came to visit me during the first days I was here, though it was but a short and very hurried visit, and I have not been able to speak seriously with him. I would have preferred his visiting me at another time when on both sides we could have enjoyed it more. Now it was very strange to me and seemed to me more or less like a dream, as does this whole affair of lying ill here.

Except for Sien, her mother, and for father, I have not seen anybody, which is indeed for the best, though the days are rather lonesome and melancholy. Involuntarily I often think how much more gloomy and lonesome things are now than, for instance, when I came to Mauve for the first time this winter. It stabs me to the heart and oppresses me whenever I think of it, though I try to throw the whole thought overboard as useless ballast.

I heard from one of the attendants that Breitner lately left the hospital. I believe that the doctor in this ward is a little more abrupt than in the more expensive wards, so much the better.

Perhaps they are less afraid here to hurt the patients a little than in the more expensive wards, and for instance they are often quick in placing a catheter in the bladder without many " ceremonies " or compliments. Well, so much the better I think, and I repeat I find it here just as interesting as in a third-class

waiting-room. If I could only work, but I must submit. I have a book of Dickens and my books on perspective with me.

I hope you will write again, you know the address is: City Hospital, Brouwersgracht,—4 Class—6 Ward—No. 9.

Yours,

Vincent.

I think when Sien had to leave I was too nervous, and it caused a relapse, but there are moments when one cannot always keep calm. She is so alone there, and I should like so much to go and see her, for the days must be hard for her.

209

Dear Theo, July 1 1882.

I have just got back to my studio and write to you at once. I cannot tell you how delightful it is to be better again, nor can I tell you how beautiful all things appeared to me on the way from the hospital; and how the light seemed clearer and the spaces more infinite, and every object and figure more important. But there is still one drawback, for next Tuesday I must again go and see the doctor to tell him how I feel, and he has warned me that I may have to stay another fortnight more or less in the hospital according to what is necessary. At all events, it would be a good piece of luck if I did not have to go back.

As soon as I feel some trouble I must go there, and even if I do not feel anything particular I must go Tuesday to be examined. The feeling of recovery makes one forget all possible catheters, sounds and syringes. Still one sees the doctor arriving with them, and then it is not a very pleasant moment.

Well those are the little miseries of human life.

But what we may call a "grande misère," is pregnancy and confinement. Sien's last letter was very melancholy, she had not been confined as yet but awaited it every hour, and now that the waiting has lasted for days I am very anxious about it, and it was especially to visit her that I asked the doctor if it were any way possible to give me a short leave instead of the walks in the garden. So to-morrow morning I go to see her with her mother and her

child, Sunday being the only day for visitors. The last letter from her was not written by herself but by the nurse, who asked if we could not come some time. But after all it may be that we shall not be allowed to see her. Poor girl, she is plucky enough though, and not easily frightened. No; according to that last letter there was no real danger, but she was very weak. I cannot tell you how I long for her now, and there were moments when I was not sorry I had to suffer a little also, rather than stand there in perfect good health, for then it would have been too unjustly divided.

If everything goes well however Sien will be back this month; may it be so. But the proverb says: "mal de mer dure longtemps." This throws still a gloomy shadow over the delightful feeling of recovery. I long for to-morrow and dread it at the same time.

The first person I met here on the Schenkweg was my friend the carpenter, who has already helped me many a time with some little jobs, in making the instruments for the perspective, and who is at the same time foreman for the owner of the studio about which I wrote to you. His boss was just in the yard (of which you have the drawing, the one with the meadows in the distance) and they coaxed me to go with them, and showed me they had left the room that would be my studio unpapered awaiting my decision. I said I could not decide even now. All right, said the man, but I could choose from different papers what I liked, then he would paper it, and I was not bound to anything.

And though I said I did not want this because I had to go back to the hospital, they have already started it, as they wanted to show me it finished before Tuesday. I must say the house is exceedingly comfortable, and looks very neat and well built.

The enormous finished attic alone would be a beautiful studio, though the room on the north would have to be used as such. And the price is very cheap indeed; in the city it would be twice as much. Three guilders a week for a large upper floor is very little even in comparison with neighbourhoods like the Noordwal or Buitensingels, and the location is excellent for a painter. There is a view from the attic window that is fairylike. However, I did not want to make any decision because I, as well as Sien, am ill. But as soon as we are better I will take it. There is air and space, delightful to work in and keep healthy; light from the north, and in the other room, from the south. There is a little kitchen which I

hope to draw often, also with a little window that looks out on the courtyard.

Then I must not forget to tell you that I had unexpectedly while in the hospital a visit from Mr. Tersteeg, which in a way greatly pleased me, though we did not speak about anything in particular as it was not necessary. But I was very glad to see him. And then a few days later Iterson also came, but I cared much less about that. And then came Johan van Gogh, whom I thought was in Helvoirt, but it seems he lives here on the Stationsweg at present. In case you send me something at the beginning of this month will you address the letter to the hospital, then it will be all right, because the porter promised to keep the letters for me in case of absence (according to the rules of the hospital as long as one has not left definitely, and asks for it). On Tuesday I have to pay again at the hospital, and the house rent too, but I have the money for it. But the most delightful thing about the whole recovery is that the love for drawing revives, and also the feeling for things around me which seemed almost extinct for a long time and had left a great void. I am again interested in everything I see. And then I have not smoked a pipe for almost a month, and it seems an old friend regained. I cannot tell you how happy I am to sit here in the studio again after having been so long surrounded by chamber pots, etc., though the hospital is also beautiful, very beautiful, especially the garden with all those convalescent people, men, women and children. I made a few scratches, but as a patient one is not free to work as one should, neither is one fit for it. Well, adieu, write soon and believe me with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

210

Dear Theo, Sunday afternoon.

As I wrote to you yesterday I have been to Leyden. Sien was confined last night, she has had a very difficult time, but, thank God, her life has been saved and a very nice little boy too.

Her mother and little girl and I went there together; you can

imagine how anxious we were, not knowing what we should hear when we asked for her at the hospital. And how very glad we were when we heard: "confined last night . . . but you may not speak for long with her." I shall never forget that, "you may not speak for long with her," for it meant that, "you can speak with her," and it might have been, "you will never speak to her again." Theo, I was so happy when I saw her again, and she was lying near the window that overlooked a garden full of sunshine and green, and she was in a kind of doze from exhaustion; and then she looked up and saw us all. Oh, boy, she looked up and was so happy to see us, and was it not good luck that we should have been there exactly twelve hours after it had happened, as there is only one hour a week when visitors are allowed. And she brightened so, and in a moment she was wideawake and asked after everything.

But what I am most astonished at is the child which, though it has been taken with forceps, is not injured at all, and it was lying in its cradle with a worldly wise-like air.

How clever they are those doctors! But according to the description it was a critical case. Five professors stood around her when it happened, and they had given her chloroform. Before that she had suffered a great deal because the child did not move from nine in the evening until half-past one. And even now she has much pain. But she forgot everything when she saw us, and even told me that we should begin to draw soon again, and I would not mind in the least if her prediction came true right away. There has been no rupture at all which often happens in such cases. Deuce take it, but I am so thankful. Only the gloomy shadow is threatening still, and Master Albert Dürer knew it well enough when he placed Death behind the young couple in that beautiful etching you know. But let us hope that the dark shadow will remain a shadow that passes over.

Well, Theo, you know all about it, without your help Sien would probably not be among the living. Another thing, I had told Sien to ask the professor to examine her well, because she often suffered from what they call leucorrhœa. And he has done so and given her advice about what she must do to become quite well again.

And he said that more than once, first when she had had quinsy and then when she had a miscarriage, and then this winter when she was also pretty far gone; and by years of a life of unrest and

worry, she had been thoroughly weakened; but now when she need no longer lead such a life everything will come right, by rest, strengthening food, being much in the open air, and having no heavy work to do.

When she is rid of all that misery there will come quite a new period in her life, and though she cannot get back her springtime, that is past and was but barren, her St. John's green will be the fresher for it. You know how the trees in the middle of the summer when the greatest heat is over get new, fresh young shoots—a new young cover of green over the old weathered one.

I am writing to you at Sien's mother's near a window that looks out on a courtyard.

I have drawn it twice, once in a large size and once in small. C. M. has these two and they were the ones Rappard liked, especially the large one. I wish you would see them when you go to see C. M., for I should like to know your opinion, especially about the large one. When are you coming? I am longing very much to see you. Well, brother, it is your fault that I am so happy to-day that I cried for joy. Thanks for everything, boy, and believe me with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

211

Dear Theo, Tuesday afternoon.

Tidings from Sien that she is getting on well. If it continues like this she must leave the hospital a fortnight after her confinement. This urged me to decide about taking the new house, that she may find a warm nest on her return after so much pain. So I made an arrangement with the owner. In the first place that he would help me to move at once, viz. that he would lend me a few men from the Yard for an afternoon to carry over my furniture, because I myself may not lift many heavy things, indeed not at all. And secondly, that I shall not pay him any rent before I myself or Sien come to live in it definitely, for perhaps she will come back from the hospital before me. Meanwhile I must make some arrangement with the old landlord about the present month

(for as I was ill and did not know when I would be better, I could not give him notice that I should leave). I hope I shall get off with just one or two weeks' rent to pay, at least I do not intend to pay him the full month.

Perhaps you have sent something already, and then I shall find your letter to-morrow morning with the porter of the hospital. But if you have not sent anything I will ask you kindly to do so soon, for I am short of cash and will have to pay fr. 10 in advance to enter the hospital again, so that my entrance there depends on the receipt of your letter. This morning the porter had no letter as yet for me.

Now most of the moving is done. Sien's mother is helping me; it is quite a job, for the whole house is full of plaster, and must be scrubbed. But the studio and the alcove are clean, and almost all the furniture has been moved. Now we just sit down for a bite to eat.

I am feeling pretty good, at least much better than I have done for a long time. Yesterday I met the superintendent of the hospital, Dr. van Tienhoven, on the street, and told him how I was getting on and he said it was all right.

So I hope to be quite well soon.

If I had planned this new house myself and had arranged especially for a studio, I could not have done better than it is now. And no other house on this street is like this inside though the exteriors all look alike. That I am in it is really the fault of the storm that broke the window of the former studio, if it had not happened I should not have known anything about this house.

It was the carpenter who told me about it at the time and said: why do you not go and live next door?

Well, brother, between all the moving I hammered off another drawing, and this time it was a water-colour. It was a sketch that remained unfinished because of my illness. So that now things are coming to life again. It represents fishing smacks on the beach, big hulls of boats that are lying in the hot sand, and the sea far away in a blue haze, for it was a sunny day, but the sun was behind me; so one must only feel it by a few casting shadows and the vibration of the hot air above the sand.

It is but an impression, but I think it is rather correct. My fingers are itching to set to work again and I need not tell you that

I would rather go to Schveningen than to the hospital. But what must be, must be. Now I am longing very much for your letter, and still more for your visit if only I am not in the hospital then.

I wonder what you will say about the new house and also what you will think of Sien when you see her, and about the new little kiddie. I heartily hope you will feel some sympathy for Sien, as she deserves it. Another thing . . . do you think you could get some more of that Ingres paper as thick as the enclosed sample, but with a little more tone? If so, bring it with you when you come, together with those of my sketches which you do not care to keep.

Of course I hope that you will keep "Sorrow" and the best ones, especially the large "Sorrow" for yourself.

Adieu, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

212

Dear brother, (6 July '82.)

I received your letter with enclosed fr. 100, and thank you heartily for it, and I want to write you at once. Because I think it is well to explain a few things to you according to my best knowledge and with all seriousness, because it is of importance that you *know* and *understand* them well. So I hope that you will read this letter patiently and at your ease, for so much depends on it for me. To-morrow morning I go back to the hospital and I can lay down my head quietly if I know that you are informed about everything as explicitly and clearly as the distance allows.

How much more could I wish you were here so I could show you everything, and talk things over with you. But let us hope that will happen in August. Before I begin to write about different other things, I must tell you that a part of your letter describing Paris by night touched me very much. Because it brought back to me a memory when I also saw "Paris tout gris," and was struck by that very peculiar effect with the black figure and characteristic white horse which gave the full value to the delicateness of that peculiar grey. That little dark note and that temperate white are the key to the harmony. But by chance while

in the hospital an artist has lately made a great impression on me, who describes that "Paris tout gris" with a master hand. In "Une Page d'Amour" by Emile Zola I found some views of the city so masterly painted or drawn quite in the same sentiment as that simple passage in your letter. And that little book induces me to read everything by Zola of whom up to now I knew only a few short fragments for which I tried to make an illustration: "Ce que je veux," and another fragment that described a little old peasant, exactly like a drawing by Millet.

There is something confoundedly artistic in you brother; cultivate it, let it in the first place take root, and then branch out; do not give it to everybody, but keep it seriously for yourself, think it over, and do not count it a mischance if by that thinking it concentrates itself and takes a more or less important place in your activity. But perhaps I intrude on forbidden ground, so for to-day no more about it. One thing more, there is "colour" in your short description which is palpable and discernible to me, though you have not carried through your impression till it had taken a more robust form, and stood there discernible and palpable for everybody. At the point where you drop the description, begin the real throes and anguish of creating; but the intelligence of the creation you possess confoundedly well. Now you can go no further, because you do not believe in yourself in this respect, otherwise you would jump the ditch, that is to say you would venture further. But enough of this, there is in your description a "je ne sais quoi," a fragrance, a memory of, for instance, a water-colour by Bonington, only it is still vague, as if in a haze. Do you know that to draw in *words* is also an art which sometimes betrays the slumbering of a hidden force like the small blue or grey clouds of smoke indicate a fire on the hearth. I certainly appreciate what father and mother did during my illness,—you know that I wrote you at once about it,—likewise I appreciated the visit of Tersteeg. However, I did not write at once to father and mother about Sien or the like, but only with a few words kept them informed about my recovery. And this is the reason why. Because something remained of what happened last summer and this winter that seems to put an iron barrier between the past and the present.

I do not intend to ask father and mother for their advice and opinions *in the same way* as I did last year, because it was then proved

to me that there is a decided difference in our thoughts and views of life. However, it is my greatest longing to keep peace, and to convince father and mother that it would not be well for them to oppose me, thinking me somebody who is always dreaming and incapable of action,—and that they would be mistaken if they thought that I regarded things impractically so that it would be necessary for them to "guide" me.

Look here, Theo, believe me I do not say it in bitterness despising or depreciating father and mother,—or in self-praise—but only to prove to you a fact, namely this one: father and mother are not the people who understand me,—neither in my mistakes nor in my good qualities,—they cannot realize my feelings,—to argue with them is of no use. What is to be done now??? This is my plea, which I hope you will approve of. I hope to be able to manage so that I can save ten or fifteen guilders next month. Then—but not before—I will write to father and mother that I have something to tell them. I will beg father to repeat his trip here at my expense, and to come and stay a few days with me.

Then I will show him Sien and her little baby which he does not expect,—and the neat house and studio full of the things I am working on,—and I myself then quite recovered as I hope.

I think all this will make a better and deeper and more favourable impression on father than words or letters. In a few words I will tell him how Sien and I struggled through the hard time of her pregnancy this winter,—how faithfully you helped us though you only heard afterwards about Sien; that she is invaluable to me, first by the love and affection which circumstances founded between us, and secondly because from the beginning she has devoted herself with much goodwill, intelligence, and common sense to help me in my work. So that she and I heartily hope that father will approve that I took her to wife. I cannot say otherwise than "took her," for the ceremony of marriage is not what makes her my wife, but it is a bond that already exists,—a feeling that from both sides we love each other, help each other, and understand each other. I wish father could get a fresh and clear impression of a new future for me, that he could see me here in surroundings quite different from what he possibly expected, that he could be quite reassured about my feeling for him and might have good courage for my future. See, Theo, I know of no shorter, no more honest

way or means than what I write to you to redress quickly and practically the good understanding between us. Write and tell me what you think about it.

Also, I do not think it superfluous to tell you once more, though it is difficult to say it, what I feel for Sien. I have a feeling of being at home when I am with her, a feeling as if she gives me my own hearth, a feeling that our lives are interwoven. That is a heartfelt, deep feeling, serious and not without a dark shadow of her gloomy past and mine, a shadow about which I have already written you, as if some evil would threaten us against which we would have to struggle continuously all our lives. At the same time, however, I feel a great calm and brightness and cheerfulness at the thought of her, and the straight path that is lying before me. You know how I wrote you last year much about K., so that I think you will be able to know what passed within me. Do not think that I then exaggerated my feelings; it was a strong passionate love I felt for her, quite different from that for Sien. When I learned in Amsterdam what I had not expected, that she had a kind of aversion for me, that she considered my behaviour as forcing her, and refused even to see me, and that "she left her own house as soon as I entered it," then, but not before, that love for her received a deadly stroke. And this I only perceived when I awoke to realization here at the Hague this winter.

I then felt within me an inexpressible melancholy that I cannot possibly describe. I know that I then often, often thought of a manly word by father Millet: "il m'a toujours semblé que le suicide était une action de malhonnête homme." (It has always seemed to me that suicide was the deed of a dishonest man.)

The emptiness, the unutterable misery within me made me think: yes, I can understand that there are people who drown themselves. But I was far from approving of this, and I found strength in that word above-mentioned, and thought it by far the better view-point to take heart and to find a remedy in work. And you know how I put this in practice. It is hard, very hard, aye quite impossible to consider my love of last year as an illusion, like father and mother do, but I say: "*though it never will be it might have been.*" Illusion it was not, but our view-points differed, and circumstances took such a turn that our paths diverged further and further instead of coming together.

That is how I think about it, it is my clear and sincere thought, *it might have been but now it is no longer possible.* Was K. right in feeling aversion for me? Was I wrong in persisting? I declare I do not know. And it is not without pain and sorrow that I recall and write about it,—I wish I could only understand why K. acted so, and also how it was that my parents and hers were so decidedly and ominously against it, less by their words, though certainly by them too, than by their complete lack of warm, living sympathy. These last words I cannot soften, but consider it as a feeling of theirs which I want to forget.

Now, as things are, it has become as a large deep wound which has healed but is still always sensitive.

Then could I feel immediately this winter a new "love"? Quite certainly not. But that those human feelings were not extinguished or deadened within me—but that my sorrow awoke within me a need of sympathy for others, is that wrong??? I think not. So *at first* Sien was for me only a fellow-creature, as lonesome and unhappy as I myself. However, as I myself was not discouraged, I was then just in the mood to be able to give her some practical support, what at the same time was for myself a spur to remain above water.

But by and by and slowly it became different between us—*a real need of each other*, so that she and I could not be separated—our lives became more and more united, and then it was *love*.

The feeling between Sien and me is *real*, it is no dream, it is reality. I think it is a great blessing that my thoughts and energy have found a fixed aim and a decided direction. It may be that what I felt for K. was a stronger passion, and that she was in some respects more charming than Sien, but that Sien's love should be less true for all that, certainly not, for circumstances are too serious, and all depends on quick action and practice, and that was so ever since the beginning when I met her. Look here, what is the result, when you come you will not find me discouraged or melancholy, but you will come into an atmosphere that will appeal to you, at least it will please you—a new studio, a young home in full swing.

No mystical or mysterious studio, but one that is rooted in real life—*a studio with a cradle,* a baby's high-chair—where there is no stagnation, but where everything pushes and urges and stirs

to activity. Now, if somebody would come to tell me that I am a poor financier I will show him my domain. I have done my best, brother, to take care that you could see (and not only you but everyone with eyes in his head) that I aim at and sometimes succeed in doing things practically. *How to do it.* We had this winter the woman's pregnancy, my expenses for getting settled; now the woman has been confined, I have been ill four weeks and am not well as yet. Notwithstanding all that, the house is neat and bright and clean and well-kept, and I have most of my furniture, beds and painting materials. It has cost what it has cost, indeed I will not undervalue it, but then your money has not been thrown away. It has started a new studio that even now cannot do without your help, but it is going to produce more and more drawings, and it is full of furniture and working materials that are necessary and keep their value.

Well, boy, if you come here to a home full of life and activity and know that you are the founder of it, will that not give you a proper feeling of satisfaction, much more than if I were a bachelor living in restaurants? Would you wish it otherwise? You know my life has not always been happy, but often was very miserable, and now by your help my youth comes back and my real self develops.

I only hope that you will keep in mind this great change, even when people will think it foolish of you to have helped me and help me still. And I hope that you will continue to see in the present drawings the germ for the next one. A little time in the hospital and then I set to work again and the woman with the baby posing for me.

To me it is as clear as day that one must feel what one draws, that one must live in the reality of family life if one wishes to express intimately that family life,—a mother with her child, a washerwoman, a seamstress, whatever it may be. By constant practice the hand must learn by and by to obey that feeling. But to try to kill that feeling, that strong wish to have a household of my own, that would be suicide. Therefore I say "forward," notwithstanding dark shadows, cares, difficulties, alas often through the meddling and gossip of people. Theo, know it well, though I *keep out of it*, as you rightly advise me to do, it often grieves me to the heart; but do you know why I do not contradict them any more

and why I keep out of it? Because I must do my work, and all that gossip and worry must not cause me to deviate from my path. But I do not keep out of it because I am afraid of them, or because I am at a loss for an answer. Also, I often notice that when I am present they do not say anything and even pretend they never have said anything.

As to you, when you know that I keep out of it so as not to make myself nervous and because of my work, you will also understand my attitude and not think it cowardly of me, won't you?

Do not imagine that I think myself perfect or that I think it no fault of mine that many people take me to be a disagreeable character. I am often terribly melancholy, irritable, hungering for sympathy, and when I do not get it I try to act indifferently, speak sharply, and often even throw oil on the fire. I do not like to be in company, and it is often painful and difficult for me to mingle with people, to speak with them. But do you know what is the cause, if not of all, of a great deal of this? Simply nervousness; I who am terribly sensitive, physically as well as morally, became nervous during those miserable years that drained my health. Ask a doctor, and he will understand at once that nights spent on the cold street or in the open, the anxiety to get bread, a continual strain because I was out of work, the estrangement from friends and family, cause at least three-fourths of my peculiarities of temper, and that those disagreeable moods or times of depression must be ascribed to this. But you or anyone who will give himself the trouble to think about it, I hope will not condemn me because of it, or find me unbearable. I try to fight it off, but that does not change my temperament, and even though this may be my bad side, confound it, I have a good side too, and cannot they credit me with that also?

Now tell me if you approve of the following little plan for telling father and mother, and to bring about the better situation. I have not the slightest desire to write about it or go and speak about it, because then I would fall back to my old failing, viz. putting it in such a way that they would be hurt by some expression or other. Well, I think when the woman comes back with her baby, I quite recovered and back from the hospital, the studio in full swing,—then I would like to say to father: will you repeat your visit now, and stay a few days with me to talk over some things?

And then as a little attention I would enclose the money for the journey. I do not know of a better plan.

Adieu, thanks for everything, a handshake and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

213

Dear Theo, Thursday.

It is the evening before I go back to the hospital, and I do not know what they will tell me there; perhaps I shall only be there a short time, perhaps I shall have to keep my bed for days. Therefore, I write to you once more from home. It is already late, and it is so quiet and calm here in the studio, but outside it is storming and raining, which makes the calm inside the greater. How I wish you could be with me, brother, this quiet hour, how much I would have to show you. The studio looks so real, I think, plain greyish brown paper, a scrubbed wooden floor, white muslin curtains at the windows, everything clean. And of course studies on the wall, an easel at each end, and a large white deal working table. Then adjoining the studio is a kind of alcove where I keep all the drawing boards, portfolios, boxes, sticks, etc., and where I also keep the woodcuts. And in the corner a closet with all the bottles and pots, and then all my books. Then the little living room with a table, a few kitchen chairs, an oil stove, a large wicker easy chair for the woman in the corner, near the window that overlooks the wharf and the meadows which you know from the drawing. And beside it a small iron cradle with a green cover. This last piece of furniture I cannot look at without emotion, for it is a strong and powerful emotion that seizes a man when he sits beside the woman he loves with a baby in the cradle near them. And though it was but a hospital where she was lying and where I sat near her, it is always the eternal poetry of the Christmas night with the baby in the stable, as the old Dutch painters saw it, and Millet and Breton, a light in the darkness,—a star in the dark night. So I hung the great etching by Rembrandt above it, the two women by the cradle, one of whom is reading from the Bible by the light of a candle, while great shadows cast a deep clare-obscure into the whole room. I have hung still other prints

there, all very beautiful ones, "The Christ Consolater," by Scheffer, a photograph after Boughton, "The Sower" and the "Diggers" by Millet, "The Bush" by Ruysdael, and beautiful large woodcuts by Herkomer and Frank Holl, and "The Bench of the Poor" by de Groux.

Well, and then in the kitchen there is the strictly necessary, so that if the woman comes back before me she will find everything she needs, and can prepare some dinner in ten minutes, so that she can feel that I have thought of her when she comes in a house with flowers before the window where she will sit. And up in the large attic a large bed for us, and my old one for the child with all the bedding in good order. But you must not think that I bought all that at once; this winter we already started to buy things bit by bit, though I did not know then how things would go and where we would have to live. And now, thank God, the result is, that this little nest is ready for her after all her pain. But we have been busy these days, her mother and I, especially the former. The most difficult thing was the bedding; we made and altered everything ourselves, bought straw, seaweed, bed-ticking, and filled the mattresses ourselves in the attic. Otherwise it would have been too expensive. And now having paid my old landlord I have still fr. 40 of what you sent me. It is true that to-morrow I will have to pay fr. 10 at the hospital, but that gives me two weeks of food and medical treatment, so that I shall have sufficient without your sending more than usual this month, though during it I had the expense of moving, of getting settled, and Sien's return after her confinement, and the buying of the cradle, etc. "On est sûr de périr à part, on ne se sauve qu'ensemble," I think this word is true and I build my life on it, could this be wrong or a miscalculation? See, brother, I think of you so often, so very very often of you these days; in the first place, because all I possess, all that I really have belongs to you, even my own energy and love of life, for now with your help I can go forward, and I feel the power to work growing in me.

But there is another reason why I so often think of you.

I know how only a short time ago I came home to a house that was not a real home, with all the emotions now connected with it, where two great voids stared at me night and day. There was no wife, there was no child. I do not think there were fewer cares for

all that, but certainly there was less love. And those two voids accompanied me, one on each side, in the street and at work, everywhere and always.

There was no wife, there was no child.

See, I do not know whether you have had that feeling that forces at moments when one is alone a groan or a sign from us: My God where is my wife, my God where is my child—is living alone worth while?

When I think of you I suppose I am not mistaken in believing there is in you, though less passionately and nervously than in me, but to some extent at least, something of the same melancholy, at least at some moments. And I do not know whether you approve of it or not, whether you think it right or wrong when I tell you I sometimes think of you in that way. But this much I believe about you, and this much I know of myself, notwithstanding my nervousness, that there certainly is in both our characters a basis of serenity—serenity *quand bien même*—so that neither you nor I are unhappy, because that serenity is caused by our own true and sincere love for our profession and work, and art takes a great place in our minds and makes life interesting. So I will certainly not make you melancholy, but only try to explain my deeds and thought from your own sentiments.

Now, speaking of father,—do you think father would remain indifferent and make objections—near a cradle? You see a cradle is not like anything else,—there is no fooling with it,—and whatever there may be in Sien's past—I know no other Sien than the one of this winter,—than that mother in the hospital whose hand pressed mine when we both felt tears in our eyes looking at the little baby for whom we had been working all winter. And just listen, *entre nous soit dit*—without preaching a sermon, it may be true that there is no God here, but there must be one not far off, and at such a moment one feels His presence. Which comes to the same as saying, and I readily give this sincere profession of faith: I believe in God, and that it is His will that man lives not alone but with a wife and a child, when everything is normal. And I hope that you will understand what I have done, and take it as such, viz. as a natural thing, and that you will not think about my fooling or being fooled. And, brother, when you come, and I hope you will come soon,—then see in Sien only a

mother and an ordinary housewife, and nothing else. For that is what she really is, and I feel she knows it the better because she knows the "reverse of the medal." The last thing I bought was a few plates, forks, spoons and knives, for neither Sien nor I possessed them before, and I thought: another one for Theo or for father when they come to visit me. So your place at the window and your place at the table are ready and waiting for you.

. . So, I only want to ask,—you will certainly come, won't you? I thought it wise and discreet of you not to have spoken to father and mother about it. Now that the confinement is over the flowers bloom again, and it was better to wait until now to tell father and mother. I mean I thought it better to keep the thorns to myself and show them only the rose. So when Sien comes back and I am better I want to tell it in the way I mentioned to you, so when they ask you about it you can just give a hint

Adieu, good night.

Yours,

Vincent.

214

Dear Theo, Friday evening.

I just enclose a word with my letter of last night. And I can tell you that I have been to see the doctor in the hospital, who told me that as I had been pretty well these days I need not come back unless I should happen to get worse.

This afternoon I sent at once to the doctor who has treated me, not the superintendent, a drawing to show my gratitude.

It was a Scheveningen girl knitting, made at Mauve's studio, and really the best water-colour I had, especially because Mauve had put some touches in it, and had watched me make it and drawn my attention to some points. I should like to have kept it as a souvenir, but in the delight of recovery I felt the need of showing my gratitude.

To-day I received a letter from father and mother, and wrote to them as soon as I heard I need not go back to the hospital.

Now I should like to take a trip to Scheveningen by car to-morrow morning, and then draw a little on the beach.

So my address is now Schenkweg No. 136.

In acknowledgment of his visit I also wrote a word to Mr. Tersteeg, to tell him I had left the hospital, and thanked him for his unexpected visit.

I should like to go to see Sien next Sunday. I had a note from her telling me that yesterday she was allowed to sit up for half an hour for the first time, and that the baby was all right.

I get tired and exhausted very soon, it is because I had to keep quiet in bed so long, and that is a queer feeling. But in many respects I feel well and better than last winter, and I am so cheerful and grateful for many things.

I hope you will soon find a half-hour to write me if you approve of my telling father and mother in that way. But first Sien must get a little stronger, for she must not be excited or anxious at present about anything, quite decidedly not—but in a month or six weeks, according to the progress of her recovery.

She saw father when he visited me, for it was visiting hour, and she was sitting in the hall downstairs waiting, but of course father did not know her.

It is already late, and I want to get up early to-morrow morning and go out with my drawing materials as if nothing had happened between now and the last time I sat in the dunes at Scheveningen. I wish I could succeed in making something for Rappard.

Adieu, Theo, good night, how delightful it is to be back home again; best wishes and good luck, and what I especially wish you is that serenity before mentioned. A handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

P.S.—That Emile Zola is a famous artist, I am now reading "Le Ventre de Paris"; it is confoundedly clever.

215

Dear Theo,

Friday I received the tidings from the hospital at Leyden that Sien might come home Saturday, so I went there to-day and we

came home together, and now she is here on the Schenkweg and so far all is well, both she and the baby. She can nurse it and the baby is quiet.

How I wish you could have seen her to-day. I assure you her appearance had quite changed since this winter, it has been a complete transformation. If some of this is to my credit, and that through your help, of course much more is due to the professor who has treated her. But where again the professor does not count is in the effect on her of the strong attachment between us two. A woman changes when she loves and is loved, when there is nobody who cares for her she loses her spirits and the charm is gone. Love draws out what is in her and on it her development decidedly depends. Nature must have its free course, must go its normal way; what a woman wants is to be with one man and with him for ever. That is not always possible, but when it is otherwise it is against nature. So she has now quite another expression than this winter, and her eyes look different, her glance is calm and quiet, and there is an expression of happiness on her face, of peace and quiet, the more touching because of course she is still suffering. I wrote to you once that the form of her head, the line of her profile, is exactly like that figure by Landelles " L'Ange de la Passion," so that is far from ordinary, it is decidedly noble, but it does not always strike the eye at once. To-day, however, it was exactly, exactly so. Before she left the hospital, the professor, who felt real sympathy for her, as he already knew her before, and treated her this time with special care, and at her request examined her thoroughly (because I had made her promise to ask this before she went) has taken the trouble to speak with her at length and in detail about what she has to do and not to do to keep well.

When she went away, not only the nurse of her ward, but the head nurse herself came to say good-bye to her. I was present, and as I had had three letters from that person when Sien was not allowed to write, I thanked her for this. And she stood talking with us for some time. Luckily it was quite warm fine weather and the journey came off all right. Sien's mother and her little girl had come to the Schenkweg and waited for us there. It was indeed a delightful home-coming, and Sien was in high spirits about everything, especially about the cradle, about the easy chair, about everything. But she was especially glad to see again her

little girl, to whom I had given a pair of new boots for the occasion, and who looked very pretty.

Last May there was a combination of difficulties, her confinement, my illness, complicated by the question—how would things go and where could she live when she left the hospital. In many respects there has come light and relief. At times she still suffers much pain in consequence of the operation with the forceps; there are still more natural results of her confinement, there is the great weakness, but one can see that there is a renewing and reviving in her—a recovery of her body and a recovery of her soul at the same time. There is now here an atmosphere of "home," of one's own "hearth." I can understand Michelet saying: "La femme c'est une religion."

For at least six weeks after her confinement she will probably feel pain and will have to be very careful.

I believe that you will see, for instance, from the special attention of the professor and head nurse for her, that she is somebody for whom serious persons have sympathy, for indeed it is quite remarkable that they have taken such care of her.

When I came into the maternity ward where I saw different patients, it struck me that she was quite a different person from the others, though she is simple enough. But there is more spirit and sensitiveness in her; one can see that suffering and hard times have refined her. I hope you will not have any scruples about making her acquaintance.

I was greatly amused by what Sien told about her conversations with the professor; that was deucedly funny, and he seems to be very jovial with his patients; for instance, he said: I say, are you fond of gin and bitters, and can you smoke cigars? Yes, she answered. I only asked it, he said, to tell you that you need not give it up. But on the contrary he vehemently forbade her to use vinegar, mustard and pepper. On days when as often happens she has more thirst than hunger, she must take some gin and bitters as medicine, to give her an appetite.

He has given her a list of nourishing foods, after consulting her as to what she could afford. I myself shall also follow his advice in these things. Meat is good for her, but once or twice a week is sufficient, it is not necessary every day.

Her first remedy, the most important medicine, was to have a

home of her own, that is what he continually insisted upon. I was afraid that perhaps Sien would have to take expensive things, but the diet that he prescribed is really the most economical one can imagine. So that I really think that we can manage with fr. 150 a month. Besides, he told Sien that during the next two years if the child should ever become ill she could always consult the professor at Leyden and also get free medicine. "I do not only want to help you through your confinement, my lass," the professor said, "but I want you to become a strong healthy woman again in a few years. You have a whole life ahead of you if you mind what I tell you." Well, he has talked with her and advised her about large things and small, as if he were her own father, so she came home much more cheerful and bright.

I am getting on well though I still feel very weak, but I shall get over it in time. But this is not surprising when you realize that now for two months I have had a bad digestion, little appetite, fever, etc., which still troubles me a little.

I have also started drawing again, and though it gives me a headache and soon tires me, that will pass by and by, especially as I shall be able to begin at home with the woman and the child posing for me. It disappoints me to still feel so weak, but it is always so after an illness such as I had.

The two drawings I made lately are both water-colours, because I wanted to make a trial.

However, it seems to me that even now I must work harder on the real drawings, which is the basis of all the rest. But as you saw from the last one, I begin to wash-in by degrees.

As soon as I am quite well again I should like to make a decided water-colour on Harding, because this paper allows (more than the Whatman) the putting on of a solid foundation of black and white before one begins to wash in it, without it spoiling the aspect of the water-colour. But now I cannot work long enough at a time, which worries me a great deal, as I long so much to set to work, especially in the open air. In the meantime I am glad for the present to be able at least to do a little. I began this letter last night, and I can now tell you that we, that is, the woman, the two children and I, spent a night in the large attic.

The bedroom looks a good deal like the hold of a ship, because it is wainscoted, and I think it is very healthy. The cradle must

be carried downstairs during the day. Everything was all right, and if no difficulties arise from without, which I hope will not be the case, we within will get along very well. With me it is so that I do not feel strange in the company of the woman and the children, but I feel exactly as if I were more in my element, and as if we had been together a long time. To use my hands to do things for which Sien is too weak, for instance making the beds or a thousand other things, is not unusual for me. I have often done things like that, either for myself or for sick people, etc. And that those things do not stand in the way of painting and drawing is proved clearly enough by the old Dutch pictures and drawings.

That the studio and the family life mingle as one is no drawback, especially for a painter of the figure. I remember perfectly interiors of studios by Ostade, small pen drawings, probably corners of his own house, which show well enough that Ostade's studio looked very little like those studios where one finds Oriental weapons, and vases and Persian rugs, etc. Now, speaking more decidedly about art, I sometimes feel a great longing to start *painting* again.

The studio is larger now, the light better; I have a good cupboard to keep my paints in, so they will not make too much dirt and mess. I have already started with water-colour.

It depends on my becoming well again, but as soon as there is no danger of a relapse, and I can go out and sit in the open air, I intend to start it all again, and put some force behind it. I think now that Sien and I live together, and do not keep up two separate houses, I shall be able to spend more of the fr. 150 a month than I have hitherto on painting materials.

Neither Sien nor I are afraid of having to manage with little, and as long as I do not earn anything by selling drawings we should not care to have more furniture or household things. For we would much rather wait to buy such things, than to borrow more money now, even if we could get it.

As soon as she has quite recovered Sien will begin posing seriously again, and I assure you her figure is good enough. That she poses well and is fit for it you can see for yourself from "Sorrow," for instance, and a few other drawings you have.

I have some more studies from the nude that you have not seen as yet; I should like to go on with that as soon as she is able, for one learns much from it. Even if I could not continue working in the

open air for some time for fear of a relapse (which I hope will not be the case) I shall at all events find subjects enough at home and shall not have to sit idle. I had a fine letter from father and mother.

Just think, they enclosed two coupons. They must not do that again, however, because I know they need it themselves, and I repeat, with the money from you we can manage now that things have taken such a good turn as to Sien's condition and my recovery.

So I would rather not receive money from father and mother, as I wrote to you I should like to send father the money for the journey here as soon as I can spare it, and when Sien is well again, and then when he is here we can speak about everything.

What pleases me more than the coupons is that their feeling is the best I can possibly expect under the circumstances, so that when I speak to them about Sien I hope they will not at once oppose it but will accept it with good will.

The other day I saw the exhibition of French art from the collections Mesdag, Post, etc. There are many beautiful things by Dupré, Corot, Daubigny, Diaz, Courbet, Breton, Jacque, etc. What I particularly admired was the large sketch by Th. Rousseau from the collection Mesdag: a herd of cows in the Alps, and a landscape by Courbet: yellow, sandy rolling ground, covered here and there with fresh young grass and bordered by dark wood, against which a few white birch trees stand out, far in the distance little grey houses with red and blue slated roofs, and a narrow, light, delicate grey streak of sky over it. But the horizon very high, so that the soil is the principal thing. And that fine streak of sky serves more as a contrast to make you feel the rough material of the masses of dark earth.

I think this is the most beautiful thing by Courbet I have ever seen. The Dupré's are superb, and there is a Daubigny, of this I could not see enough, large thatched roofs against the slope of a hill.

Also a small Corot, a pond and *lisière de bois*, on a summer morning at four o'clock or thereabouts. One single little pink cloud shows that the sun will soon rise—a silence and a calm and a peace which fascinate one.

I am glad I have seen all this.

Now I finish this letter, I hope you will write soon, and I especially hope that you will really come to Holland by August.

I write to you " between times," for you can imagine there is much to do. I let Sien work about the house, but I must always be on the look-out to see what she is doing in order to be always on hand as if by chance when she wants help. For she is really weak still (she told me the professor had said " damned weak ") but still it is good for her to find some distraction in keeping busy. Everything that cheers her and makes her happy is medicine for her. Neither is the baby absolutely out of danger—you know how her confinement went, that always has influence on the child—and before six weeks have passed little can be said how things will go. Much depends on the mother's milk of course. I hope it does not bother you to read all this. I wanted to write but a short note, and it has become a long letter. I am not yet out of cash, but if you could send something about the 20th, it would be welcome to get through the last days of the month.

Adieu, with a hearty handshake in thoughts,

Yours,

Vincent.

216

Dear Theo, Tuesday morning.

This time I have to tell you something about a visit from Mr. Tersteeg. This morning he came here and saw Sien and the children. I would have wished that he showed a kind face to a young little mother just out of child-bed. But that was asking too much.

Dear Theo, he spoke to me in a way that you can perhaps imagine.

" What was the meaning of that woman and that child? "

" How could I think of living with a woman, and children in the bargain? "

" Was it not just as ridiculous as driving my own four-in-hand through the city? "

To which I answered that this was certainly quite a different case.

" Had I gone mad? It was certainly a thing that came from an unsound mind and temperament."

I told him that I had just received the most reassuring information from more competent persons than he, viz. the physicians from the hospital, as much about the condition of my body as the power of my mind, to stand exertion.

So he jumped from one thing to another, brought in my father and, just fancy, even my Uncle of Prinsenhage!!!

He would see to it. He would write.

Dear Theo, for the sake of the woman, for my own sake, I restrained myself, I kept my temper. I answered his, in my opinion, too indiscreet questions curtly and dryly, perhaps a little too softly, but I preferred being too soft to losing my temper. By and by he calmed down a little. I asked him if it would not be ridiculous if they received at home an indignant letter from him, and then soon after a kind request from me to come and visit me at my expense, so as to speak about the same matter. That was not without effect. At least he looked up and said: "did I intend to write myself?" "Can you ask that," said I. "Of course I will, but you must admit that now it is a very untimely moment, as they are in the bustle of moving at home,[1] and as the woman's condition is so that the least emotion would occasion a falling of the womb that might become incurable. To cause her any anxiety strain or nervousness now would be murder."

Oh! then of course he would not write, but again he talked about: I was just as foolish as a man who wanted to drown himself, and he wanted to save me from it. I said that I did not doubt his good intention, and therefore I tried not to be angry at his words, though such a conversation was very disagreeable to me. And at last because I showed that I decidedly wanted to avoid further discussion he went away.

I told him only that I had written you all about it. That calmed him somewhat.

I tried to draw his attention to the drawings, but he just looked around and said, "Oh! those are the old ones." There were some new ones, but he did not seem to notice them. Well, you know you have most of the new ones or C.M. has some of them, etc. He was hasty in everything, one thing only he was sure of, I was a fool and did everything that was wrong. I ask you, how is it

[1] The Rev. Van Gogh had been called to the village of Nuenen, and the family were to go there in September.

possible to talk to anyone in that way, and what can be the use of it? That is just what I am afraid of, an unsympathetic, domineering, indelicate and indiscreet meddling in my most intimate and private affairs. No man will stand that. So though I did not lose my temper, I am very angry with Mr. Tersteeg, and will have nothing to do with him, and not speak to him again as long as he is in that constable-like mood. I write it to you at once.

I think he is capable of causing all kinds of miseries through his untimely interference. Occasioning trouble and worry at home and at Prinsenhage (and Prinsenhage has nothing, absolutely nothing to do with it), can that not be stopped??? I am on good terms with father and mother now, and who knows but that he will spoil everything again. As soon as possible I will write myself, but how confoundedly mean it is of Tersteeg to pester so. And who ?—a poor weak woman only a few weeks out of childbed. I think it mean, but he does not feel so, and it is with him always and always that one thing, *money*. It seems he knows and worships no other god. I, for my part, feel that to women, children and the weak, one must be good and kind, and I have a sort of respect and emotion for them.

Then he uttered one other abusive remark,—I would make that woman unhappy, etc. I said he was not capable of judging this now, and I asked him not to repeat such a thing. Sien loves me and I love Sien, we can and will live together on what I would otherwise have lived alone,—we will save and economize in all respects and as much as possible,—you know well enough I have already told you about this.

I cannot repeat to you often enough, brother, how my whole future depends on it. For a man can recover once from disappointment and injury in love—and in his business and plans. But that must not happen too often. Now I have recovered or am recovering in body and soul, and so is Sien, but it might become fatal if we were again pushed down. But there is between Sien and me an understanding, in the extreme case of their trying to force us, that is, if we cannot live here together, we will at least emigrate together. That means a ten to one chance of certain death if one has no money and is not strong, but we would prefer that to being separated. So just think this over and try to prevent, if you can

possibly do so, my being thwarted too much by Tersteeg or other persons.

I, myself, am not yet so strong that I can defend myself as I could do at another time. By and by very slowly I must become absorbed in my work again, but I really cannot stand such visits as that of this morning.

If Tersteeg and others had their own way they would of course tear Sien and me apart. That is what they want, and they would not spare brute force. Our staying together depends entirely on the monthly allowance from you. I, for myself, would refuse your allowance if you took Tersteeg's view-point. I will not leave Sien, without her I am a broken man, and then I should also be ruined in my work and everything, then I would never get over it, and not wanting to be a nuisance or trouble to you any longer I would say: Theo, I am a broken man, and everything is lost, it is no use your helping me any more. *Living with the woman* I have good courage, and then I say: the money from you will make a good painter of me. With Sien I will work with all my strength and energy, but without her I give it up. So that is the way things are.—So often you have proved that you understood me more, and treated me infinitely better than others.

I hope it will be the same this time.

There is between you and me real sympathy in many things, and it seems to me, Theo, that all your trouble and all my trouble will not be in vain. You have always helped me. I have continued working and now feel while I am recovering that new forces develop themselves. See, what there is between you and me is I think more serious than the anger of Tersteeg, and cannot be spoiled by his interference or that of others.

But for the sake of order and peace we must try and quietly stop that interference. But you must excuse my being rather upset by it. It has been the first painful hour for Sien and me since our return from the hospital.

But we will not mind it any more if you still approve of us, and we will not allow ourselves to be upset by it. But write us soon, for I greatly long for a letter from you. I will not let my mind be filled with care and anxiety because my recovery depends on my remaining calm. Otherwise I am pretty well; the woman and child are so good, so quiet and dear that one must be cheered by it.

But Sien changed like a leaf on the tree when she heard Tersteeg talk, and so did I.

I saw the doctor again, and he gave me some medicine to hasten my recovery as much as possible. I am getting stronger and the fever is slowly leaving me.

Now because of Tersteeg I should like to send my letter to father and mother a little sooner, though I would have preferred to wait until later. As soon as you have sent the money, about the 20th, I will write home, but I would much rather have waited until they had moved and Sien had quite recovered. And even now I would much rather wait, but I am afraid Tersteeg would get ahead of me. To send the money for the journey to father is a proof of my goodwill I think, and a little attention from which I hope they will understand that I appreciate them.

So write soon, and if all this might be a reason, brother, to bind us more firmly together, and to better understand and have more confidence in each other instead of being separated by Tersteeg's interference, or anyone else's, then I do not regret this morning's incident.

I repeat, I do not pretend the pretension to keep up any social standing or to live easily, all the expenses needed for the woman are only what are necessary for her, and they must be met, *not by receiving more but by our economizing.* That economizing is not a hindrance to us but a pleasure, because of the love between us. The feeling of recovery thrills her, as I am thrilled by the longing to work again, and to become absorbed in it. She is a very sweet little mother, so simple, so touching—if one only knows her. But there came an ugly line of pain, or I do not know what, on her face, when she heard Tersteeg talking to me and caught a few words. It may be that Tersteeg acted so because he was taken by surprise—but I cannot think it right of him or quite excuse it.

Well, enough of this, but, brother, write me soon, for I assure you that a kind letter from you helps me more than my medicine.

Well, adieu boy,—I must tell you that Sien when she is calm has become a little mother, so quiet, so refined, so touching, as an etching or drawing or painting by Feyen Perrin. I am longing to draw again with her posing for me. I long for her and my recovery,

for quiet and peace, and especially for some sympathy from you. Sien sends you her regards, a handshake in thought and believe me;

Yours,

Vincent.

217

Dear Theo, Wednesday.

I cannot tell you how I regret the untimely visit of Tersteeg. It is a reason for me to write now about a few things, when I would rather have waited and talked them over with you. I have told you that I wanted to marry Sien, and this as soon as possible. Mind, however, that I wish to talk over this subject personally with you before I tell anything to father. I can agree with you better; you feel things more justly than all the others together, and when you say something it is worth while. Even though we do not agree about some things, we can always meet each other half-way, because we speak in sympathy and calmness.

I also believe that if no one else meddled, unasked, everything would come right in all respects. As soon as there is a question of marriage, however, people flare up quickly and with a lot of noise, and there is no arguing with them, you can hardly get in a word.

So I no longer wait to write about what I would rather talk over. About marrying, you said: do not marry her, etc., and you thought Sien fooled me, etc.

Then I answered you that I could not agree with you in that, etc.

But I did not want to flatly contradict you, because I believed, and still believe, that in time you would grow to like Sien if you knew her better, and then of course you would no longer think that she fooled me or the like. When this is gained we can talk again about marriage I thought. But you will also remember that in my last letter I did not speak openly about it.

Only I said this much at the time, *there is a promise of marriage between her and me*, and I do not want you to consider her as a mistress or as somebody with whom I have a liaison, without caring for the consequences.

Now I come back to it once more. That promise of marriage is twofold, firstly, a promise of civil marriage as soon as circumstances will permit it, but secondly, it is a promise meanwhile to help each other, to support each other, to cherish each other as if we were already married, by sharing everything together, to live all in all for each other, not letting ourselves be separated by anything. Now for the family, the civil marriage is probably the most important question. For her and for me it is indeed important, but it is secondary to the real essence of the matter, the love and faith between us as it exists already and grows daily.

I would propose to you to let the whole question of civil marriage rest for an indefinite time, and for instance postpone it until I shall earn fr. 150 a month by selling my work, when your help will not be necessary any longer. With you, but only with you, I will thus agree that for the time being I shall not marry her by civil marriage before my drawing has progressed so far that I am independent.

By degrees as I begin to earn, you send less every month, and at last when I do not need your money any longer, we can talk again about civil marriage. But until that is so it will be quite absurd, after all that happened this whole winter and especially these last months, to try to separate or divide us. We are bound and knit together by a strong bond of mutual affection, and by the help we mutually give each other.

For she is my partner in work, if I may call her so, and is infinitely more than an ordinary model, because she is so willing and intelligent in posing that I cannot praise her enough. After all I have now told you, I hope you will look at things with more confidence. This winter you heard, for instance, from Heyerdahl better things about my work than what Tersteeg thinks about it. I now feel so much renewed animation for my work that I have good hope of making some progress this autumn. Perhaps about Christmas, when the year I have allowed myself is ended, I will send you small water-colours of which the last little drawings, that already have some touches of brown and red and grey, were the beginning. And sometimes I feel a great longing to paint also, a very great longing and ambition.

Especially now that the better light and the better studio urge me, involuntarily, towards it. The doctor forbids my working

hard as I still tire very easily, but that will gradually disappear, and then I shall set to work with full energy.

I only hope now, Theo, that what I tell you about marrying will show you that I do not want to have my own will in everything, that as far as I can I will give in to your wishes; but let this then prove to you that I deserve your confidence and your writing me about different things. I cannot get on with the others, and with you I can talk and settle things. What I want is to save Sien's life and that of her two children. I do not want her to fall back to that terrible state of illness and misery in which I found her, and from which she is saved for the present. This I undertook, this I must continue. I do not want her to ever feel again that she is deserted and alone. I want her to feel and to know in every way that I cherish a tender love for her, and affection for the children. And—whoever may disapprove of this,—you will understand and not try to prevent it. Her recovery I attribute to you, in so far that I only credit myself with a small part. I have only been the means to it.

I repeat, I am sorry that what I tell you in this letter I have not been able to tell you personally, and after you had made the acquaintance of the woman, then I perhaps might have added more things to make you feel I am not unreasonable. But even now I hope you will come before long and that at all events you will write soon.

Sien will soon be at her ease with you, and then you will not look down upon her, and consider her in the way Tersteeg did yesterday.

Be fully assured of her and my warmest affection, receive a handshake in thought and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

What I should like to talk over with you once more is the condition in which I found her, and things from her past. The poor creature has had a very hard time of it. And yet there is still in her vitality and delicacy of feeling that have not been quenched.

I repeat once more that I long so very much for your coming,

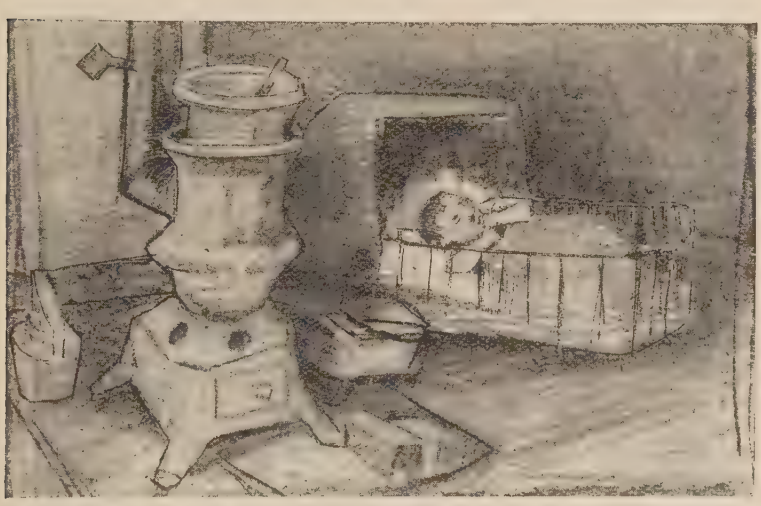
apart from everything, because I have such a need of sympathy and affection. I would like so much to walk with you once more, *though the Ryswyk mill is no longer there. Enfin.*

218

Dear brother,

It is already late, but I want to write to you once more. You are not here, but I wish you were, and sometimes it seems to me we are not far from each other.

To-day I promised myself something, that is to consider my illness, or rather the remains of it, as non-existent. Enough time



has been lost, the work must be continued. So, well or not well, I set to drawing again, regularly from morning until night. I do not want someone to tell me again: "Oh! these are but old drawings."

To-day I made a drawing of the baby's cradle with a few touches of colour in it.

I am also working on a drawing like that of the meadows I sent you lately. My hands have become too white, but how can I help it?

I will go out and work in the open air, even if it should cause the return of my illness. I cannot keep from working any longer.

Art is jealous, she does not want us to choose illness in preference to her, so I do what she wishes.

Therefore I hope you will receive again in a short time a few new drawings. People like me *may* not be ill, so to speak.

You must well understand my preception of art. In order to grasp the essence one must work long and hard. What I want and aim at is confoundedly difficult, and yet I do not think I aim too high.

I want to make drawings that *touch* some people. "Sorrow" is a small beginning, perhaps such a little landscape as the "Meerdervoort Avenue," the "Ryswyk Meadows," "Fish Drying Barn," are also a small beginning. In those there is at least something directly from my own heart.

Either in figure or in landscape I should wish to express, not sentimental melancholy, but serious sorrow.

In short, I will reach so far that people will say of my work: he feels deeply, he feels tenderly—notwithstanding my so-called roughness, perhaps even because of this.

It seems pretentious now to speak so, but that is the reason why I want to push on with full strength.

What am I in the eyes of most people,—a good-for-nothing, or an eccentric and disagreeable man—somebody who has no position in society and never will have, in short, the lowest of the low. Very well, even if that were true, then I should want to show by my work what there is in the heart of such an eccentric man, of such a nobody.

This is my ambition, which is, notwithstanding all, founded less on anger than on love, founded more on a feeling of serenity than on passion. It is true that I am often in the greatest misery, but still there is within me a calm pure harmony and music. In the poorest huts, in the dirtiest corner, I see drawings and pictures. And with irresistible force my mind is drawn towards these things.

More and more other things lose their interest, and the more I get rid of them, the quicker my eye grasps the picturesque things. Art demands persistent work, work in spite of everything, and a continuous observation.

By persistent, I mean in the first place a continuous work, but

also not giving up your opinion at the bidding of such and such a person. I do hope, brother, that within a few years, perhaps even now little by little, you will see things by me that will give you some satisfaction for your sacrifices.

I have had very little conversation with other painters lately. I have not been the worse for it. It is not the language of the painters but the language of nature to which one has to listen. I can now understand better than six months ago why Mauve said: "do not speak to me about Dupré, speak rather about the bank of that ditch, or the like." It sounds rather crude, but it is perfectly true. The feeling for the things themselves, for reality, is more important than the feeling for pictures, at least it is more fertile and more vital.

Because I have now such a broad ample feeling for art and for life itself, of which art is the essence, it sounds to me so shrill and false when people try to compel me.

I for my part find in many modern pictures a peculiar charm which the old masters have not.

For me one of the highest and noblest expressions of art is always that of the English, for instance, Millais and Herkomer and Frank Holl. What I mean in relation to the difference between the old masters and the modern ones is—perhaps the modern ones are deeper thinkers.

There is a great difference in sentiment between the "Chill October" by Millais, and the "Bleachery at Overveen" by Ruysdael, and also between the "Irish Emigrants" by Holl, and the "Bible Lecture" by Rembrandt.

Rembrandt and Ruysdael are sublime, and for us just as well as for their contemporaries, but there is something in the modern painters that appeals to us more personally and intimately.

It is the same with the woodcuts by Swain and those of the old Dutch masters.

So, I think it was a mistake when a few years ago the modern painters had a rage for imitating the old masters.

Therefore I think father Millet is right in saying "Il me semble absurde que les hommes veuillent paraître autre chose que ce qu'ils sont." It seems but a commonplace saying, but yet it is fathomless, deep like the ocean, and I for my part think one would do well to take it to heart. I just wanted to tell you that I will

set to work regularly again in spite of all, and I want to add that I am longing so very much for a letter from you, and now I wish you good night. Adieu, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

Please do not forget the thick Ingres if you can get it —enclosed I send a sample. Of the thin kind I still have some. On the thick Ingres I can wash with water-colours, on the other it always becomes blurred by no fault of mine.

I hope I shall be able to draw that little cradle *persistently* a hundred times more, not counting what I did to-day.

219

Dear Theo, Sunday morning.

I received your letter with enclosed fr. 50. My hearty thanks for both, and I am very glad you have given some details about your coming. Do you approve of our arranging to spend together the time you have free from business and visits, and trying on both sides to be in the same frame of mind as we were in the days of the Ryswyk mill?

As for me, brother,—though the mill has gone and the years and my youth are gone as irrevocably,—deep within me has risen again the feeling that there is some good in life, and that it is worth while to exert oneself and to try to take life seriously. Perhaps, or rather certainly, this is rooted more firmly than it used to be, when I had had less experience. The question for me now is to express the poetry of that time in my drawings.

Your letter to me crossed one of mine, in which I told you I had resolved to set to work again, ill or not ill. Well, I have done so, and I find it does me no harm, though I must take more medicine to brace me up. But the work itself puts me of course in a much better mood. I could not bear to keep away from my drawings any longer.

Now when you come, brother, I have a few water-colours for you. The deuce, it is nice working in the studio. Do you

remember last winter I told you in a year you will have your water-colours?

Those I have now made are simply to show you that if I study the drawing, the correct perspective and proportion, this causes me at the same time to make progress in water-colours. And I for my part made them as a proof to show my progress in water-colours after six months of drawing exclusively, and secondly to see where I need to work harder in regard to that fundamental drawing on which everything depends.

They are landscapes with complicated perspective, very difficult to draw, but for that very reason there is a real Dutch character and sentiment in them. They resemble those I sent last, they are no less conscientious in drawing, but in addition these have the colour,—the soft green of the meadow contrasting with the red tile roof, the light in the sky contrasting stronger with the sombre tones of the foreground, a yard full of wet wood and sand.

Tersteeg in his judgment of me and my behaviour always starts from the fixed idea that I can do nothing and am good for nothing. I heard it from his own lips: "Oh, that painting of yours will be like all the other things you undertook, it will come to nothing."

He spoke like that this winter; he speaks so now, to which I answered that I did not wish to go to see him or have him come here for six months, as such sayings hinder and upset me. As long as he does not hinder me in my work I will absolutely forget him.

When this winter he said something about his taking care that I should receive no more money from you, that was a different thing, and I wrote to you at once about it. But until such a thing happens again, I will not write about him any more. I would think myself too foolish if I ran after him saying: Mr. Tersteeg, Mr. Tersteeg, I am a real painter like other painters, notwithstanding anything you may say.

No, just because I have indeed the artistic sense in my very bones and marrow, I think it much better to go quietly camping in the meadows or the dunes, or to work in the studio from the model, without taking the least notice of him.—I am glad that you have been reading "Le Ventre de Paris"; lately I read "Nana" also. I tell you Zola is really a second Balzac. Balzac the first describes

society from 1815 until 1848. Zola begins where Balzac ceases and goes on until Sédan, or rather until now. I think it splendid. I just want to ask you what you think of Mme François, who when poor Florent is lying unconscious in the middle of the road, where the farmer's wagons are passing, lifts him into her cart and takes him home.

Though the other farmers cried: let that drunkard lie, we have no time to lift men from the gutter, etc.

That figure of Mme François stands out so calmly and nobly and sympathetically through the whole book against the background of the Halles, in contrast with the brutal egoism of the other women.

See, Theo, I think Mme François is truly humane, and in regard to Sien I have done, and will do, what I think someone like Mme François would have done for Florent, if he had not loved politics more than her. Look here, that humanity is the salt of life, without it I do not care to live, that is all.

I care as little for what Tersteeg says as Mme François cared for the other women and farmers when they cried: "let him be, we have no time," and for all the hurry and gossip.

Then I must tell you that it will not be long before Sien earns her own bread by posing. My very best drawing, "Sorrow," at least I think it the best of those I have made, well, she has posed for it, and in less than a year I shall make regularly drawings of the figure. I promise you that. For know it well, though I have much love for landscape I have more love for figure drawing. But this is the most difficult and therefore costs me more study and work, and also more time. But do not let them tell you she keeps me from my work; you will see for yourself at the studio what there is of it. If it were true that for her sake I worked less, yes, then you would be right, but now it is just the reverse, indeed.

Well, I hope we shall agree on that by and by, less by words than by drawings. I hate words,—Enough.

But, brother, I am so very glad you will come, shall we then really go together through the meadows, with nothing around us but that quiet, tender, soft green, and the light sky above? Fine, —and the sea and the beach, and the *old* Scheveningen. Delightful.

A propos,—I saw the other day very beautiful little fusains by

Th. de Bock, with touches of white and delicate blue in the sky, very well done, and which I like better than his pictures.

I cannot tell you how delightful it is to have ample space in the studio. I feel the result immediately now that I have set to work. We will teach them to say: "they are but the old drawings."

It was not for my pleasure that I was ill.

You must imagine me sitting before my attic window as early as four o'clock in the morning, studying, with my perspective instrument, the meadows and the Yard, when they are lighting the fires to make the coffee in the little cottages, and when the first workman comes loitering into the Yard. Over the red tile roofs a flock of white pigeons comes soaring between the black smoky chimneys. But behind it all, a wide stretch of soft tender green, miles and miles of flat meadow, and over it a grey sky, as calm, as peaceful, as Corot or van Goyen.

This view over the gabled roofs with the grass-grown gutters, at early day, and those first signs of life and awakening, the flying birds, the smoking chimneys, and that figure loitering far below in the Yard—this is the subject of my water-colour. I hope you will like it.

Whether I shall succeed in the future will depend more on my work than on anything else. If I may keep in good health, well, then I will fight my battle quietly in this way and no other, by calmly looking through my window at the things from nature and drawing them faithfully and lovingly, for the rest, taking only a defensive attitude in case of eventual molestation, for I love drawing too much to want to be distracted by other things. The peculiar effects of perspective interest me more than personal intrigues.

If Tersteeg only understood that my painting is a thing apart, quite different from the rest, he would not make such a row.

But now in his eyes I have deceived and disappointed Mauve. Then he thinks I only do it to get money from you. All this is absurd—too absurd to give it any importance. Mauve himself will understand afterwards that he was not deceived in me, and that I was not at all unwilling. It was *he himself* who taught me to draw more conscientiously before I did anything else. But then there came a misunderstanding between us, perhaps because Tersteeg was behind it.

In answer to your letter I must say one thing, that your not knowing about Sien's child was not my fault, for when I told you about her I certainly mentioned it, but you probably thought of the child that was not then born.

In a few words I have already spoken about the love of humanity as some people possess it, as for instance Mme François in the book by Zola. However, I haven't any humanist plans or projects for trying to help everybody, but I am not ashamed to say (though I know quite well that the word humanism is in bad odour) that I for my part always felt and will feel the need to love some fellow-creature. In preference, I do not know why, an unhappy, forsaken or lonely creature.

Once I nursed for six weeks or two months a poor miserable miner who had been burned. I shared my food for a whole winter with a poor old man, and Heaven knows what more, and now there is Sien. But until now I do not think all this is foolish or wrong. I think it so natural and right that I cannot understand people being generally so indifferent to each other. I must add that if I were wrong in doing so, you were also wrong in helping me so faithfully—that this were wrong would be too absurd. I always believe that "love thy neighbour as thyself" is no exaggeration, but a normal condition. Be it so. And you know that I will exert all my efforts to try and sell my drawings soon, for the very reason not to abuse your kindness.

I certainly and confidently believe, brother, that to all the insinuations they will possibly make to you to stop your sending me money, you will quietly answer: that you have faith in my becoming a good painter, and so will continue to help me. That in regard to my private life and business, you left me free therein, and will not force me or help others to force me, and then I believe they will soon stop their gossip. The only thing they can do is to shut me out of some circles where they consider me an outcast. Which is nothing new and leaves me rather cool. More and more I will concentrate on art. And though some people may damn me irrevocably and forever, it lies in the nature of things that my profession and my work will open to me new relations, the fresher because they will not be frozen, hardened, and made sterile by old prejudices.

Well, brother, thanks for your letter and the fr. 50; my drawing

has dried in the meantime, and I want to touch it up. The lines of the roofs and gutters shoot away in the distance like arrows from a bow, they are drawn without he itation.

Adieu, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

P.S.—Read as much of Zola as you can, that is good for one, and makes things clear.

220

Dear Theo, Wednesday morning.

I do not at all want you to fancy my being in a depressed or abnormal mood. And therefore I already wrote you in my last letter about my work, and as I have to ask you a few things in relation to that I will not put off writing again.

When you come, I want to try and show you some water-colours done in different ways. Then we can see and talk over what you think the best. So I work regularly on that every day, and will continue to do so until you come.

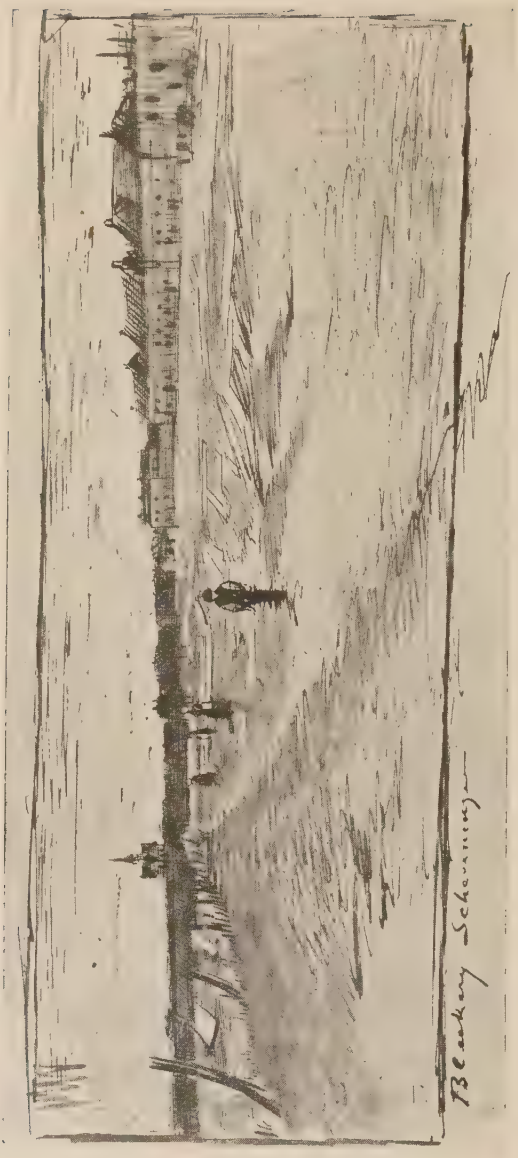
I have now made three of Scheveningen, also the " Fish Drying Barns," which you know,—drawn as minutely—but now there is colour too. I am sure you know, Theo, that it is not more difficult to work in colour than in black and white, perhaps indeed the reverse, for, as far as I can see, three-fourths depend on the original sketch, and on its quality rests almost the whole water-colour.

It is not sufficient to give a *à peu près*, it was and is my aim to bring it to a higher plane.

In the black and white " Fish Drying Barns," that is already visible, I think, for there you can follow everything and trace the construction of the whole, and look here, I think the reason of my working so much easier in water-colours is that I have studied for a long time so hard on more correct drawing.

Tersteeg called my doings a waste of time, but you will soon see that I have gained time.

I already feel it now, and when you come you will see it for yourself. This evening I went through all the shops looking for



the thick Ingres paper, but in vain. They have the thin kind, but not the thick or double. Sometime ago I bought from Stam all he had, and having been in stock it had turned a fine colour. When you come do try and bring some for me. And if you cannot get it ask for "papier de la forme," that is cream coloured, strong, and one can wash-in on it. I also think it is much cheaper than Harding or Whatman, so that in the long run it saves a great deal.

When you come I know a few beautiful paths through the meadows, where it is so quiet and calm, that I am sure you will like it. I discovered there old and new labourers' cottages and other houses that are characteristic, with little gardens by the water-side, very pretty. I will go and draw there early to-morrow morning. It is a road that runs through the meadows of the Schenkweg to Enthoven's factory or the Zieke.

I saw there a dead willow trunk, just the thing for Barye for instance. It was hanging over a pool that was covered with reeds, quite alone and melancholy, and its bark was moss-grown and scaly, something like the skin of a serpent—greenish, yellowish, but for the greater part a dull black, with bare white spots and knotted branches. I am going to attack it to-morrow morning.

I also made a bleachery at Scheveningen, direct from nature, made in one sitting, almost without preparation, on a piece of very coarse Torchon (unbleached linen).

Enclosed a few small sketches of it.

About the time of your arrival I will have some things to show you. I think you will like that "Fish Drying Barn" now it is made in colour.

Be sure lad, that I am quite my old self again, and be sure I believe that all depends on the work, and that I consider everything in direct relation to it. The new studio is a great improvement on the old one; it makes work more easy, and especially for posing it is much better, because one can take a greater distance.

What I pay more in rent I am sure is made up by better work.

But I have a favour to ask. I could very well understand, and it would be very natural if instead of sending the money the first of August you gave it to me when you came, for instance the seventh of August. But as I bought paper and paint and brushes as soon as I received your last letter, and will need a few other things about the first of August, I would however beg you kindly to send me the

money about the first, though you come soon after. For I figured it out exactly, and after the first few days of August I shall be absolutely penniless. I hope it will not be inconvenient to you. Of course I do not ask more, but I ask you to send it in time, if possible the first day of August, if not in the first days of the month.

I have also a second drawing of the Ryswyk meadows, where the same subject gets quite a different aspect through a change of view-point.

You see I am quite taken up by landscape, but it is because Sien is not fit to pose yet; nevertheless, the figure remains the principal thing for me. When you come I will take care to be near the house, as long as you are in town, so you will know where to find me, and then while you attend to business and pay your calls, I will go on drawing as usual. I can meet you by appointment wherever you wish, but for several reasons it is better for us both, I think, if I do not go with you to see Tersteeg or Mauve, etc. And then, I am so used to my working clothes, in which I can lie or sit in the sand or the grass just as I want (for in the dunes I never use a chair, only sometimes an old fish basket) so my dress is rather Robinson Crusoe-like for me to go out paying calls with you.

I tell you this before your visit that you may know that I will not hinder you, but for the rest you will understand that I actually long for *every half-hour that you can spare*. I think we shall feel more at our ease if we stick to the subject of painting and drawing, and talk especially about that. But if other things do not bother or worry you, then of course I have not a single secret from you and you have my full confidence in everything. I also long very much to show you the woodcuts. I have a splendid new one, a drawing by Fildes, "The Empty Chair of Dickens," from the "Graphic" of 1870.

I could have bought three etchings by Meryon for fr. 2, but I let them go. They were indeed very beautiful, but I have so few etchings, and when I buy something I stick to woodcuts. But I wanted to tell you about them,—it is Blok who has them, and I do not know if all Meryon's are rare, and have any money value. They are from an old series "L'Artiste."—I am still wrapt up in those books by Zola. How he *painted* those Halles.

My health is pretty good, but I still feel the effect of my illness

and I will remain so for a long time. Sien and the baby are well and are getting stronger, and I love them both.

I must draw the cradle in water-colour some day (when it is rainy and I cannot work outside). But for the rest I want to show you landscape water-colour when you come. Figure water-colour I hope to make this winter, after I have been here a year. I shall first have to draw more from the nude, and more in black and white too, I think. We will talk over all that, and I am sure that your visit will contribute much towards keeping things in order and making the work succeed.

Adieu, with a handshake, Yours,

Vincent.

By going quietly on with my work I have full hope of getting by and by an entirely new circle of acquaintances in compensation for the loss of the sympathy of Mauve, Tersteeg and others, but I will not take any step towards it, not the least, it must come from the work itself.

What has happened in regard to Tersteeg is not at all unusual; everybody meets with such things in life. One cannot tell exactly where the fault lies. But with Tersteeg it is an old trouble. I now know almost for sure that long ago he told things about me that contributed not a little towards putting me in an evil light. But I need not mind that, what could harm me before cannot harm me now.

When you come to the studio you will see for yourself that it really is absurd when he says: "Oh! your drawing will never amount to anything." However, it is hard to contradict such a remark, for as soon as one does so one is called conceited, and they name the greatest of artists and say: "he fancies he is like them."

But I repeat, everyone who works with love and with intelligence, finds in the very sincerity of his love for nature and art a kind of armour against the opinion of other people. Nature is also severe and, so to speak, hard, but she never deceives and always helps us on.

So I do not count it a misfortune when I fall in disgrace with Tersteeg or whoever it may be, though I am sorry for it, *that* cannot be the cause of misfortune. If I had no love for nature or my work, then I would indeed be unhappy. The less I get on with

people the more I learn to have faith in nature and to concentrate on her.

All those things make me feel brighter and fresher,—you will see that I am not afraid of a bright green or a soft blue, and the thousands of different greys, for there is scarcely any colour that is not grey—red-grey, yellow-grey, green-grey, blue-grey. This is the substance of the whole colour scheme.

When I returned to that fish drying barn, a wonderfully bright fresh turnip green or oil-seed had sprouted in those baskets full of sand on the foreground that serve to prevent the drifting of the sands from the dunes. Two months ago everything was bare except the grass in the little garden, and now this rough, wild, luxuriant growth forms a very pretty effect in contrast to the bareness of the rest.

I hope you will like this drawing, the distant horizon, the view across the roofs of the village with the little church steeple, and the dunes, it was all so fine. I cannot tell you with what great pleasure I made it. So do come soon. I think you will approve of the change of studio when you see what infinitely greater advantages I have for the work, more distance,—better light,—more room.

Last evening I received a parcel from home. There was among other things a sort of spring coat, which comes very handy. I thought it very kind of them. And there was tobacco in it, and cigars, and cake and some underwear. In short, quite a parcel. Was not that nice of them? I appreciate it perhaps more for the kind thought than for anything else.

I had also a letter from van Rappard.

I am confoundedly pleased that the fellow is so absorbed in his English woodcuts. It is true I encouraged him in it at first, but now he needs no encouragement any longer, he is almost as enthusiastic about it as I. When you come I will show you a few which when you have seen them you will not soon forget. And there are quite different things among them than Boughton's style for instance, though he certainly is also one of the leaders. I mean things remarkable at the same time for their reality and style, drawn like Albert Dürer, and yet with much local colour and clare-obscure. One does not see these things often now, for one has to look for them in the magazines of ten and fifteen years ago, for instance, during the war of '70–'71.

Dear Theo, (July 31 '82.)

Just a line to welcome you in expectation of your arrival. Also to let you know of the receipt of your letter and the enclosed, for which I send my heartiest thanks. It was very welcome, for I am hard at work and need a few more things.

As far as I understand it, we of course perfectly agree about black in nature. Absolute black does not really exist. But like white, it is present in almost every colour, and forms the endless variety of greys,—different in tone and strength. So that in nature one really sees nothing else but those tones or shades.

There are but three fundamental colours,—red, yellow and blue, "composites" are orange, green and purple.

By adding black and some white one gets the endless varieties of greys—red-grey, yellow-grey, blue-grey, green-grey, orange-grey, violet-grey. To say, for instance, how many green-greys there are is impossible, there are endless varieties.

But the whole chemistry of colours is not more complicated than those few simple rules. And to have a clear notion of this is worth more than seventy different colours of paint,—as, with those three principal colours and black and white, one can make more than seventy tones and varieties. The colourist is he who seeing a colour in nature knows at once how to analyse it, and to say for instance: that green-grey is yellow with black and hardly any blue, etc.

In other words, he who knows how to find the greys of nature on his palette. In order to make notes from nature, or to make little sketches, a strongly developed feeling for outline is absolutely necessary as well as for the carrying it to a higher plane afterwards.

But I believe one does not acquire this without effort but in the first place by observation, and then especially by strenuous work and research, and then special study of anatomy and perspective is needed. Beside me is hanging a landscape study by Roelofs, but I cannot tell you how expressive that simple outline is, everything is in it.

Another still more striking example is the large woodcut "Bergère" by Millet, which you showed me last year and which

I have remembered ever since. And then, for instance, the pen and ink sketches of Ostade and Peasant Breughel.

When I see such results I feel more strongly the great importance of the outline. And you know for instance from "Sorrow" that I take a great deal of trouble to make progress in that respect.

But you will see when you come to the studio that besides the seeking for the outline, I have, just like everybody, a feeling for the power of colour.

And that I do not object to making water-colours; but the foundation of them is the drawing, and then from the drawing many other branches beside the water-colour sprout forth, which will develop in me in time like in everybody who loves his work.

I have attacked that old whopper of a pollard-willow, and I think it is the best of the water-colours—a gloomy landscape—that dead tree near a stagnant pool covered with reeds, in the distance a car shed of the Ryn railroad, where tracks cross each other, dingy black buildings, then green meadows, a cinder path, and a sky with drifting clouds, grey with a single bright white border, and the depths of blue where the clouds are parted. In short, I wanted to make it so as the signal man in his smock and with his little red flag must see and feel it when he thinks: "it is gloomy weather to-day."

I have worked with great pleasure these last days, though now and then I still feel the effects of my illness.

Of the drawings which I will show you now I think only this: I hope they will prove to you that I do not remain stationary in my work, but make progress in a direction that is reasonable. As to the money value of my work, I do not pretend to anything else but that it would greatly astonish me if my work were not just as saleable in time as that of others. Whether that will happen *now* or *later* I cannot tell of course, but I think the surest way, which *cannot* fail, is to work from nature faithfully and energetically. Feeling and love for nature sooner or later find response from people who are interested in art. It is the painter's duty to be entirely absorbed by nature and to use all his intelligence to express sentiment in his work so that it becomes intelligible to other people. To work for the market is in my opinion not exactly the right way, but on the contrary it is deceiving the amateurs. And the true painters have not done so, but the sympathy they

received sooner or later came because of their sincerity. That is all I know about it, and I do not think I need know more. Of course it is a different thing to try to find people who like your work, and who will love it, that is of course permitted. But it must not become a speculation, that would perhaps turn out wrong and would certainly cause one to lose time that ought to be spent on the work itself.

Of course you will find in my water-colours things that are not correct, but that will improve with time.

But know it well, I am far from clinging to a system or being bound by one. Such a thing exists more in the imagination of Tersteeg, for instance, than in reality. As to Tersteeg, you understand that my opinion of him is quite personal, and that I do not want to thrust upon *you* this opinion that I am forced to have. So long as he thinks about me, and says about me what you know, I cannot regard him as a friend, nor as being of any use to me; on the contrary. And I am afraid that his opinion of me is too deeply rooted to be ever changed, the more so, as you say yourself, he will never give himself the trouble to reconsider some things and to change them. When I see how several painters here, whom I know, worry over their water-colours and pictures, so that they cannot get out of it, I often think: friend, the fault lies in your drawing. I do not regret a single moment that I did not go on at first with water-colour and oil painting. I am sure I shall make up for that if I only work hard, so that my hand does not falter in drawing and in the perspective; but when I see young painters compose and draw *from memory*—and then haphazardly smear on whatever they like, *also from memory*,—then keep it at a distance, and put on a very mysterious, gloomy face to find out what in Heaven's name it may look like, and at last and finally make something of it, always *from memory*—it sometimes disgusts me, and makes me think it all very tedious and dull.

The whole thing makes me sick!

But those gentlemen go on asking me, not without a certain air of protection, "if I am not painting as yet?"

Now it sometimes happens to me too that I sit and improvise, so to say, at random on a piece of paper, but I do not attach any more value to this than to a rag or a cabbage leaf.

And I hope you will understand that when I continue to stick

to drawing I do so for two reasons, because before all things I want to get a firm hand for drawing, and secondly, because painting and water-colouring cause a great many expenses which do not at first give back any value, and those expenses double and redouble ten times when one works on a drawing which is not correct enough.

And if I got in debt or surrounded myself with canvases and papers all daubed with paint, without being sure of my drawing, then my studio would soon become a sort of hell, as I have seen some studios look. Now, I always enter it with pleasure and work there with animation. But I do not believe that you suspect me of *nuwillingness*. It only seems to me that the painters here argue

in the following way. They say: you must do this or that; if one does not do it, or not exactly so, or if one says something in reply, there follows a: "so you know better than I?" So that immediately, sometimes in less than five minutes, one is in fierce opposition and in such a position that neither party can go forward or back. The least hateful result of which is that one of the parties has the presence of mind to keep silent, and in some way or other makes a quick exit through some opening. And one is almost inclined to say: confound it, the painters are almost like a family, namely, a fatal combination of persons with contrary interests, each of which is opposed to the rest, and only then two or more are of the same opinion when it is a question of combining to hinder together another member. This definition of

the word family, my dear brother, is, I hope, not always true, especially not when it concerns painters or our own family. With all my heart I wish peace may reign in our own family, and I remain with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

This is nearly the effect of the pollard-willow, only in the water-colour itself there is no black, but a broken one.

Where in this little sketch the black is darkest there are in the water-colour the strongest effects, dark green, brown and grey. Well, adieu, and believe me that sometimes I heartily laugh, because people suspect me of all kinds of malignity and absurdities, of which not a hair of my head is guilty. (I who am really nothing but a friend of nature, of study, of work, and of people especially.) Well, hoping to see you soon, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

222

Dear Theo, Saturday.

Still quite under the impression of your visit, I write you a word or two, no little pleased that I can go ahead vigorously with my painting.

I should like to have seen you off at the station the next morning, but I thought you had already given me so much of your time, that it would have been indiscreet to ask to see you again that morning. I am so thankful that you have been here. I think it a delightful prospect to be able to work a whole year without anxiety, and by what you gave me a new horizon has been opened to me in painting.

I think I am privileged above thousands of others because you removed so many barriers for me.

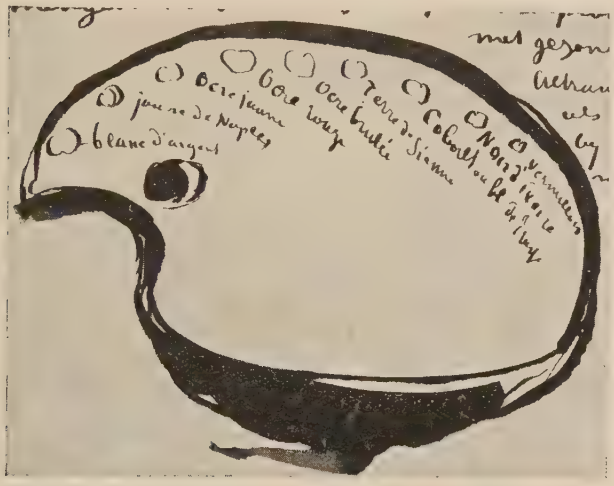
Of course many a painter cannot go on because of the expenses, and I cannot express to you in words how thankful I am to be able to go on working regularly. I began later than others, and to make

up for that time I must work doubly hard, and in spite of my ardour, I would have to stop if it were not for you.

I will tell you what I have bought.

First: a large-size moist colour-box containing 12 pieces or tubes of water-colours, with a double cover, one of which can serve as a palette; there is also room for six brushes.

That is an article which is of great value for working in the open air, and really absolutely necessary, but it is very expensive; and I had always put it off and worked with loose pieces on saucers,



which, however, are very difficult to take with you, especially if one has other luggage besides.

So this is a fine thing that once I have it, will last a long time. At the same time I laid in a stock of water-colours, and renewed my brushes. Then for oil painting I have everything now that is absolutely necessary, and also a stock of paint, large tubes (which are much cheaper than the little ones), but you can imagine I limited myself to the simple colours as well in water-colour and in oil, ochre (red—yellow—brown) cobalt and Prussian blue, Naples yellow, terra sienna, black and white, completed with some carmine, sepia, vermilion, ultramarine, gamboge, in smaller tubes.

But I refrained from choosing colours which one must mix oneself.

This is I believe a practical palette with healthy colours. Ultramarine, carmine, or the like are added when strictly necessary.

I will begin with little things, but I hope this summer to practise making large sketches in charcoal, in order to paint afterwards in somewhat larger size.

And therefore I ordered a new and I hope better perspective instrument, that can be fixed on uneven ground in the dunes by two poles, for instance, in this way—

That which we saw together in Scheveningen—sand, sea and sky—is something I certainly hope to express some time. Of course I have not spent at once everything you gave me, though I must say this, the prices of the different things were much higher than I thought, and if one counts well there are more things needed than one expected at first.

If I ask you to kindly send the usual allowance about the 20th it is not because I shall have spent all I had, but because I think it better to keep something in my pocket, in case I should need some more things while working, that guarantees a great quiet and order to the work. The moist colour-box fits in my paint-box,

so that I can carry in *one*, everything that is needed for water-colour and for painting.

I attach great importance to having good stuff to work with, and I should like my studio to look well without antiques or tapestry or rugs, but by the studies on the wall and by good material, but that must come in time by hard work. Speaking about the constable-style,—I myself feel less like a constable than like a kind of Delft skipper, for instance, and I have no objection to making my studio look like a kind of comfortable barge.

Yesterday afternoon I was in the attic of the wholesale paper house of Smulders on the Laan. I found there,—can you guess —the *double Ingres* under the name of Torchon paper; it was a kind coarser still in grain than yours. I enclose a sample to show it to you. There is a whole stock of it, old and grown yellow, very good. I only took half of a quire now, but I can always get more afterwards. I went there to buy something else, the so-called honey paper which I use now and then. Very cheap, left there from an undelivered order for the cadastre.

This is very suitable for charcoal drawing, and it comes in large pages about the same colour as the Harding.

You see this sample has a grain as rough as a piece of canvas. That which you brought has a prettier colour and is delightful, for instance, for studies of banks and ditches or soil. But I am very glad I discovered this new kind too.

Well, boy, thanks for everything, a handshake in thought. I go to work again.—Give my heartiest greetings to father and mother, thank them for what you brought me from them, and tell them I will write soon, but, according to our agreement, not about anything personal.

Adieu, I wish you a pleasant vacation, and a good return to your work, believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

223

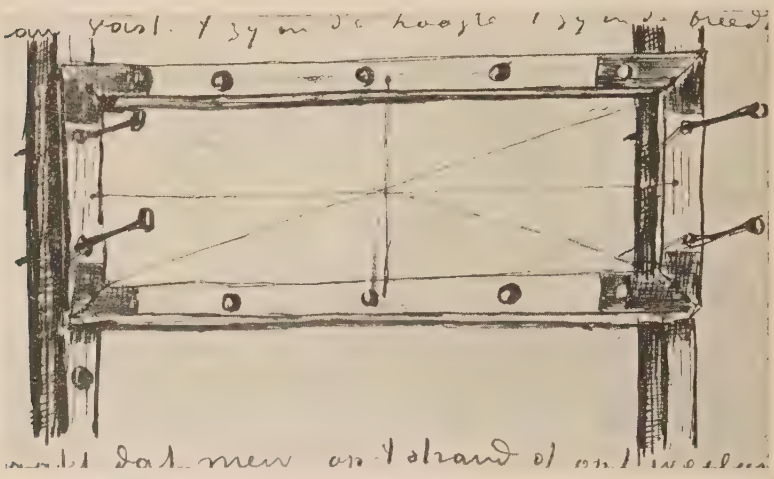
Dear Theo,

In my last letter you will have found a little sketch of that perspective instrument I mentioned. I just came back from the

blacksmith, who made iron points to the sticks and iron corners on the frame.

I consists of two long poles; the frame is attached to them lengthwise or across with strong wooden pegs.

So on the shore or in the meadows or in the fields one can look through it *as through a window.* The vertical lines and the parallel line of the frame and the diagonal lines and the cross or else the division in squares, certainly give a few principal points, by the help of which one can make a firm drawing, which indicates the large lines and proportions—at least for those who have some instinct for perspective and some understanding of the reason



why and the manner in which the perspective gives an apparent change of direction to the lines and a change of size to the planes and to the whole mass. Without this the instrument is of little or no use at all, and it makes one *dizzy* to look through it. I think you can imagine it is a delightful thing to point this instrument on the sea, on the green meadows, or in winter on the snowy fields, or in autumn on the fantastic network of thin and thick branches and trunks or on a stormy sky.

With long and continuous practice it enables one to draw quick as lightning,—and once the drawing fixed, also to paint quick as lightning.

In fact, *for painting* it is absolutely the thing; for to express

sky-earth-sea—one needs the brush, or rather in order to express all that in drawing it is necessary to know and to understand the treatment of the brush. I certainly believe that if I paint for some time, it will have great influence on my *drawing*. I already tried it in January, but then I had to stop, the reason decidedly being, except for a few other things, that I was too hesitating in my drawing. Now six months have passed that have been quite devoted to drawing. Well, it is with new courage that I start again to paint. The perspective frame is really a fine piece of workmanship; I am sorry you did not see it before you left. It cost me quite a bit, but I have had it made so solidly that it will last a long time. So next Monday I begin to make large fusains with it, and begin to *paint* small studies. If I succeed in these two things, then I hope that better painted things will follow soon.

I want my studio to be a real painter's studio by the time you come again. That I had to stop in January, you know there were several causes for it, but after all it may be considered as a defect in the machine, a screw or a bar that was not strong enough and had to be replaced by a stronger one.

I bought a pair of strong and warm trousers, and as I had bought a pair of strong shoes just before you came, I am now prepared to weather the storm and rain. It is my decided aim to learn from this painting of landscape a few things about *technic* which I feel I need for *figure*, namely, to express different *materials*, and the *tone* and the *colour*. In one word, to express the bulk—the body—of things. Through your coming it became possible to me, but before you came there has not been a day that I did not think in this way about it, only I should have had to keep exclusively to black and white and to the outline a little longer. —But now I have *launched my boat*. Adieu, boy, once more, a hearty handshake and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

224

Dear Theo,

During the few days that have passed since you left, I have made some experiments at painting. And I thought perhaps you would

be curious to know how it turned out. I wish you could again spend an hour with me in the studio, that would be the best way to tell you how I succeeded. But as this is of course impossible I will only tell you that I have three painted studies. One of a row of pollard-willows in a meadow—(behind the Geest bridge)—then a study of the cinder path near here, and to-day I was again in the vegetable gardens of the Meerdervort Avenue, and saw there a potato field with a ditch, a man in a blue smock and a woman were picking up potatoes, and I put those figures in it.

The field was of white sand, partly dug up, still partly covered with rows of dried stalks, with green weeds between.

In the distance dark green trees and a few roofs.

I made this last study especially with great pleasure. I must tell you that painting does not seem so unusual to me as you would perhaps suppose; on the contrary, I am very much in sympathy with it, as it is a very strong means of expression.

And at the same time one can express tender things with it too, make a soft grey or green find voice amidst all the ruggedness.

I am very glad I have the necessary materials, for already I had really often suppressed the desire for painting. It opens a much broader horizon.

Now I would like best to go on making quite a number of painted studies, and hang them in my studio without speaking to anybody about this change. And in case someone wonders about seeing painted things by me I would say: did you think then that I had no sentiment for that, or was not able to do it?

But I have attached great value to drawing, and will continue to do so, because it is the backbone of painting, the skeleton that supports all the rest. I like it so much, Theo, that it is only because of the expenses I shall have to repress myself rather than urge myself on. These studies are of middle size, a little larger than the cover of an ordinary painting box, because I do not work in the cover, but fix the paper for the study with thumb tacks on a frame on which canvass is stretched, that I can carry easily in my hand. Before I paint larger things I will *draw* them larger, or I will make *grisailles* of them if I can discover the technique—I will try to find it.

It becomes too expensive if one is not economical with the paint; but, boy, it is so delightful to have so many new and good materials; once more many many thanks. I will certainly try and

take care that you will never regret it, but will have the satisfaction of noticing the progress. I write you just this little word to tell you I have made a beginning. Of course the studies must become better still. I know they have many faults, but this I believe, that already in these first ones you will see there is something of the open in it, which proves that I love nature and that I have a painter's heart within me. Enclosed a small scratch of the Meerdervort Avenue. Those vegetable gardens there have a kind of old Dutch character which always greatly appeal to me.

Well, good night, it is already late, with a handshake,

Yours,

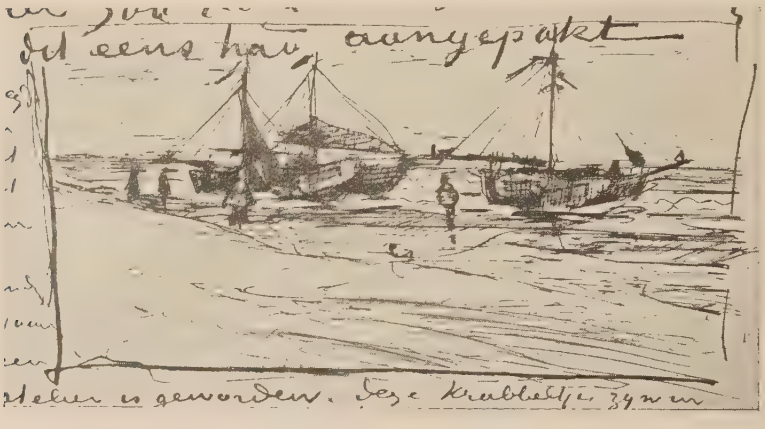
Vincent.

I am reading Zola's " La Curée."

When I had finished this letter it seemed to me something was lacking in it.

I thought I must be sure that I can write him I have started to paint such a scene of sand, sea and sky as we saw together at Scheveningen. So I kept my letter, and this morning I marched to the beach and have just returned from there with a rather large-size painted study of sand, sea and sky, a few fishing smacks, and two men on the beach.

There is some sand of the dunes in it, and I assure you that this will not be the last one. I thought you would like to hear that I had started it. I repeat, I will make sure that when you come back in half a year or in a few months or a year, the studio will have become a painter's studio. These sketches have been made in a great hurry, as you can see. Now that I have some chance, I will try and test the iron while it is hot, that means I shall go on painting. If you can send the usual amount about the 20th I can certainly go on painting for some time. I think that after a month of steady painting, the studio will have quite a different aspect. Hoping



that this will please you, I shake hands with you again and heartily wish you prosperity in everything.

225

Dear Theo, August 15th '82.

You must not take it amiss if I write you again,—it is only to tell you that painting is such a joy to me.

Last Saturday night I attacked a thing I had been dreaming about for a long time.

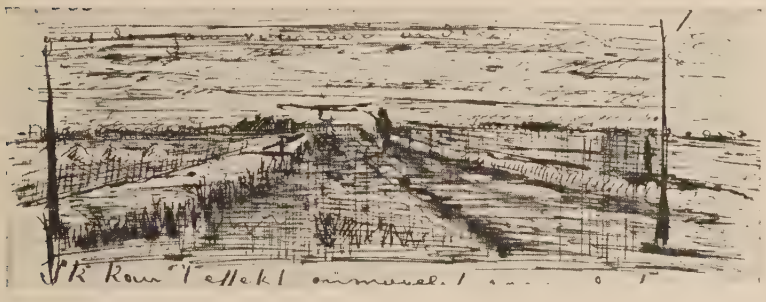
It is a view of the flat green meadows, with hay-cocks. It is crossed by a cinder path running along a ditch. And at the horizon in the middle of the picture the sun is setting fiery red.

I cannot possibly draw the effect in such a hurry, but this is the composition.

But it was purely a question of colour and tone, the iridescence of the colour-scheme of the sky—first a violet haze, in which the red sun half covered by a dark purple cloud with a brilliant fine red border; near the sun reflections of vermilion, but above it a streak of yellow that turns into green and then into blue, the so-called *Cerulean blue*, and then here and there violet and grey clouds, that catch reflections from the sun.

The ground was a kind of carpet-like texture of green, grey and brown, but full of iridescence and vibration—in that coloured soil the water of the ditch sparkles.

It is something that, for instance, Emile Breton would paint.



Then I have painted a huge mass of dune ground,—sticky, and thickly painted.

And of these two, the small marine and the potato field, *I am sure no one could tell that they are my first painted studies.*

To tell you the truth it surprises me a little. I had expected that the first things would be a failure, though I thought they would improve later on, and though I say it myself, they are not at all so bad, and I repeat, that surprises me a little.

I think the reason is that before I began to paint, I drew so much and studied perspective in order to give the construction of the thing I saw.

Now, since I have bought my paint and brushes, I have drudged and worked so hard on seven painted studies, that just now I am dead tired. There is among them one with a figure in it, a mother with her child, in the shadow of a large tree, in tone against the

dune, on which the summer sun is shining—almost an Italian effect.

I simply could not restrain myself or keep my hands off it or allow myself any rest.

As you perhaps know, there is an exhibition of the Society of Black and White. There is a drawing by Mauve—a woman at a weaving loom, probably in Drenthe, which I think superb.

No doubt you saw some of them at Tersteeg's, there are splendid things by Israëls—among others, a portrait of Weissenbruch, with a pipe in his mouth and his palette in his hand. From Weissenbruch himself beautiful things, landscapes and also a marine.

There is a very large drawing by J. Maris, a splendid city view. A beautiful W. Maris, among others, a sow with a litter of pigs, and cows. Neuhuys, Duchatel, Mesdag. From the latter, besides a fine large marine, two Swiss landscapes, which I think rather stupid and dull. But the large marine is splendid.

Israëls has four large drawings, a girl at the window, children near a pigsty—the drawing for the little picture of the Salon—a little old woman who kindles the fire in the twilight, at the time engraved for the Art Chronicle.

It is very animating to see such things, for then I perceive how much I have still to learn.

But this much I want to tell you—I feel a power of colour in me while painting that I did not possess before, things of broadness and strength.

Now I am not going to send you things *at once*, let it ripen a little first, but know that I am full of ambition and believe that for the present I am making progress. (In three months, however, I will send you something to give an idea how I am getting on.) But that is just the reason for me to persevere and to acquire what I need.

So do not think that I am satisfied with myself from what I say of my work; the contrary is true, but I think this much is gained, that when in the future something strikes me in nature I shall have more means than before with which to express it with new strength.

And I am not displeased that what I shall make in the future will look more attractive.

Neither do I believe that it will hinder me if my health should give

out from time to time. As far as I can see those are not the worst painters who now and then have a week or two when they cannot work. The cause of this may be that they are the ones "qui y mettent leur peau," as father Millet says. That does not matter, and in my opinion one must not spare oneself when it goes hard. If there follows a short period of exhaustion, that soon will pass, and so much is gained that one harvests one's studies just as the farmer harvests his crops. Now I for myself do not think as yet of taking a rest. Only yesterday, Sunday, I did not do so much—at least I did not go out to paint. I will take care that even if you come this winter you will find the studio full of painted studies.

I had a letter from Rappard yesterday; he has been to Drenthe, and judging from the two little sketches he sent me he has not been idle. He seems to work very hard and well too, figures as well as landscape.

Well, adieu, I must set out to work again, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

It is now just *two* years ago since I began to draw in the Borinage.

226

Dear Theo, Saturday evening.

My hearty thanks for your letter and the enclosed. As soon as I received your letter I bought at once seven guilders' worth of colour, so as to have some provision and to replenish my box. During the whole week we have had much wind, storm and rain, and I went several times to Scheveningen to see it.

I brought home from there two small marines.

One of them is slightly sprinkled with sand—but the second one, made during a real storm, and when the sea came quite close to the dunes, was so covered with a thick layer of sand that I was obliged to scrape it off twice. The wind blew so hard that I could scarcely keep on my feet, and could hardly see for the blowing sand. However, I tried to get it fixed by going to a little inn behind

the dunes, and there, after scraping it off, I immediately painted it in again, returning to the beach now and then for a fresh impression. So that after all I brought a few souvenirs home.

But another souvenir is that I again caught cold, with all the resulting consequences you know of, which forces me now to stay home a few days.

In the meantime, I have painted a few studies of the figure,—I send you two sketches.

The painting of the figure appeals to me very much, but it must ripen—I must learn to know the technique better—that which is sometimes called "la cuisine de l'art." In the beginning I shall have to do much scraping, and often to begin anew, but I feel that I learn from it and that it gives me a new fresh view on the things.

When you again send money I shall buy some good marten brushes, which are the real *drawing* brushes, as I have discovered, to *draw* a hand or a profile in colour. Also for very delicate tree branches, etc., they are absolutely necessary I see. The Lyon brushes, no matter how fine they may be, make too broad stripes or strokes. My painting paper is also almost used up—towards the first of September I shall have to buy a few more supplies, but I will not need more than the usual allowance.

Then I want to tell you that I quite agree with you as to several things in your letter.

Especially, I fully agree with you that father and mother with all their good and bad qualities are people of the kind that is becoming rare in the present time—more and more rare—and perhaps the new type is not at all better—and so one has to appreciate them the more.

I for myself indeed do appreciate them. I am only afraid that the feeling about which you for the time reassured them, would come back, especially in case they saw me again. They will never be able to understand what painting is. They cannot understand that the figure of a labourer—some furrows in a ploughed field—a bit of sand, sea and sky—are serious subjects, so difficult, but at the same time so beautiful, that it is indeed worth while to devote one's life to the task of expressing the poetry hidden in them.

Whenever they would see me in the future, toiling and pegging away at my work—scraping it out and changing it—now compar-

ing it correctly to nature—then changing it a little so they can no longer exactly recognize the spot or the figure—it will always remain a disappointment to them—they will not be able to understand that painting cannot succeed at once, and over and over again they will think: "he doesn't really know anything about it," and that real painters would work in quite a different way.

Well, I dare not allow myself any illusions, and I am afraid it may never happen that father and mother will really appreciate my art. This is no wonder, and it is not their fault; they have not learned to look at things as you and I have learned to look at them; they look at other things than we do, and we do not see the same things with the same eyes, or have the same thoughts raised in us by them.

To wish this were otherwise is permitted, but to expect it is, in my opinion, not wise.

They will hardly be able to understand my frame of mind, and they will not know what urges me. When they see me doing things which they think strange and eccentric, they will ascribe them to discontent, indifference, or carelessness, when there is indeed something quite different at the bottom of it, namely, the wish to pursue, *coûte que coûte*, what I need for my work. Now they are perhaps looking out for the "painting in oil." It will come now at last—and oh! how disappointed they would be, I am afraid, if they could see it, and would notice nothing but daubs of paint—besides, they consider drawing as a "*preparatory study*," an expression which for many years I have learned to hate, and think as incorrect as can be. As you well know. And when they still see me doing it as before, they will think I am for ever at that preparatory study.

Well, let us hope for the best and try to reassure them.

What you tell me about their new surroundings is very interesting. To be sure I should love to paint such a little old church, and the churchyard with its sand-mounds and old wooden crosses.

I hope I shall have the chance some time. Then you write about the stretch of heath and the pine wood close by. I can tell you I feel an everlasting home-sickness for heath and pine trees, with the characteristic figures—a little woman who is gathering wood, a peasant who is digging sand—in short, those simple things that have something of the grandeur of the sea. I always carry the wish to go and live somewhere quite in the country, if

I had an opportunity, and circumstances would permit. But I have plenty of subjects here—the woods, the beach, the Ryswyk meadows near by, and so literally at each footstep a new subject.

It would also be for the reason of living more cheaply.

But for the moment, as far as I can see, there is no direct motive, and so I am in no hurry.

I only tell it you to make you feel how sympathetic such scenery is which you describe to me as the surroundings of father and mother's new home.

It is the painting that makes me feel so happy these days. I restrained myself up to now, and stuck to drawing just because I know so many sad stories of people who threw themselves headlong into painting—who sought it in the technique and awoke disillusioned, without having made any progress but having become head-over-ears in debt from the expensive things they had spoiled. From the beginning I had a fear and dread of this. I have considered drawing, and I consider it still, as the only way to avoid that fate, and I have grown to love drawing instead of considering it a nuisance. Now, however, unexpectedly, painting gives me much scope, it enables me to see effects that were unattainable before—just those which after all appeal to me most—and it enlightens me so much more on many questions and gives me new means to express effects, so that all these things together make me very happy. It has been so beautiful in Scheveningen lately. Before the storm, the sea was even more impressive than while it raged. During the storm, one could not see the waves so well, and it was less the effect of a furrowed field.

The waves followed each other so quickly that one overlapped the other, and by the dashing of the water masses a kind of foam arose, like drifting sand, which wrapped the foreground in a sort of haze. It was a fierce storm, the more fierce, and if one looked at it long, the more impressive, because it made so little noise. The sea was the colour of dirty soap-suds. There was on that spot one fishing smack, the last of the row, and a few dark little figures.

There is in painting something infinite—I cannot explain it to you so well—but, just for expressing one's impression, it is so delightful. There are in the colours hidden things of harmony or contrasts that involuntarily combine to work together and which could not be possibly used in another way.

To-morrow I hope to go and work in the open air again.

I have read most of Zola's "La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret," and "Son Excellence Eugène Rougon," both beautiful. I find a noble figure in Pascal Rougon, the doctor who appears in the different books, but always in the background. He really proves that no matter how degenerate a race may be it is always possible by energy and strength of will to conquer fate.

He found in his profession a power that was stronger than the temperament he had inherited from his family, and instead of surrendering to his natural instincts, he followed a clear and straight path, and did not fall into the muddy water in which all the other Rougon's were drowned. He and Madame François, from "Le Ventre de Paris," are to me the most sympathetic figures. Well, adieu, I often think of you, and how I should love to see you now and then. A handshake in thought and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

While writing this I have made another study of a boy—grey, charcoal, oil, and very little colour, just for the tone.

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Dear Theo, Sunday afternoon.

I have just received a nice letter from home that pleased me very much, and clearly showed me that your visit and the things you told them about me and my work have made a reassuring impression upon them. I think this can have none but good results, and I particularly thank you for the way in which you spoke, though it seems to me you said more good about me than I deserve as yet. They seem at home very much pleased with their new surroundings and are still full of your visit.

For that matter, so am I, for several things you told me make me think of you more often than before, and certainly not with less affection. Especially also what you told me about your health makes me often think of you. I am pretty well; that I don't spare myself and act as if I had never been ill, works all right. But you understand that I have not entirely recovered. At times,

especially in the evening when tired, I feel it, but luckily it never became so bad as to prevent me from working.

This week I have painted a few rather large studies in the wood, which I tried to carry out and to finish more than the first ones.

The one which I believe succeeded best is nothing but a piece of dug-up earth—white, black and brown sand, after a pouring rain. I was so eager to continue, that I remained at my post and sought shelter as well as I could behind a thick tree. When it was over at last, and the crows began again to fly, I was not sorry that I had waited, because of the beautiful deep tone which the rain had given to the soil.

As I had begun before the rain, with a low horizon, on my knees, I had now to kneel in the mud, and it is by reason of such adventures, which often present themselves in different forms, that according to my opinion it is not superfluous to wear an ordinary workman's suit, which is less easily spoilt. The result of this was that I could bring home to the studio that piece of ground—though Mauve once rightly said while speaking about a study of his: that it is a hard job to draw those lumps of earth and to get perspective in them.

The other study of the wood is of some large green beech trunks on a ground covered with dry leaves, and the little figure of a girl in white. There was the great difficulty of keeping it clear, and to bring atmosphere between the trunks that stand at different distances, and the place and relative bulk of those trunks change with the perspective—to make it so that one can breathe and walk around in it, and to make you smell the fragrance of the wood.

It was with extreme pleasure that I made these two studies.

The same with a thing I saw at Scheveningen.

A large patch in the dunes, in the morning after the rain; the grass is comparatively green, and on it are stretched the black nets in enormous circles, which give to the soil tones of a deep reddish black and greenish grey. On that sombre ground, women in white caps, and men who spread or repaired the nets, were sitting or standing, or walking around like dark fantastic ghosts. It was in nature as strikingly gloomy and serious as the most beautiful Millet, Israëls or de Groux one can imagine—above the landscape a simple grey sky with a light streak above the horizon.

Notwithstanding the showers of rain, I made a study of it on a sheet of oiled torchon.

Before I shall be able to finish that, as much as I should like, many things must still happen, but these are the things in nature that strike me most.

How beautiful it is outside when everything is wet from the rain—before—in—and after the rain. I ought not to let one single shower pass.

This morning I have put up all the painted studies in the studio. I wish I could talk them over with you.

As I had already expected and had counted on while I was busy, I have had to buy a great many things, and the money is almost all spent on them.

For two weeks I have painted, so to say, from early in the morning until late at night, and if I continued in this way, it would be too expensive as long as I do not sell.

I think it possible that if you saw the paintings you would say that I ought to go on with it, not only at times, when I should want it very much, but regularly, as absolutely the most important thing, though it might bring more expenses. But though I myself love to do it, and probably for the present shall not paint as much as my ambition and desire demand, because of the heavy expenses, I think I will not be the loser by it when I give much of my time to drawing, and I do this with no less pleasure. However, I am in doubt,—painting comes easier to me than I expected—perhaps it would be better to throw myself into it with all strength, pegging away especially with the brush. I declare I cannot tell.

At all events, drawing in charcoal is a thing I am sure I must now study more than ever—at all events, I have enough to do and can go on. Even when I restrain myself a little in painting I can work just as hard.

If I now have painted so many studies in a short time, it is because I work hard, literally working all day, scarcely taking any time even for eating or drinking.

In several of the studies there are little figures. I also worked on a large one and have scraped it off twice, which you would perhaps have thought too hasty if you had seen the effect; but it was not from impatience, it was because I feel that I can do still better by grinding and trying, and I absolutely want to succeed in

doing better; it may cost ever so much time, ever so much trouble.

Landscape, as I have taken it up now, decidedly requires the figure too. They are studies for backgrounds, which one must study so thoroughly, because the tone of the figure and the effect of the whole depend on it.

What I like so much in painting is that with the same amount of trouble one spends on a drawing, one brings home something that renders much better the impression, and is much more agreeable to look at, and at the same time more correct too. In one word, it is more grateful work than drawing. But it is absolutely necessary to be able to draw pretty correctly the right proportion and the place of the object before one begins. If therein one makes mistakes, the whole thing comes to nothing.

I am longing for the autumn. About that time I must certainly be sure to have a stock of paint and other things. I love so much, so very much, the effect of the yellow leaves against which the green beech trunks stand out so well, and the figures no less.

Lately I partly read a rather melancholy book, "Letters and Diary of Gerard Bilders."[1]

He died at the age when I began. When I read that I am not sorry that I started late. He certainly was unhappy and was often misunderstood, but at the same time I find a great weakness in him, something morbid in his character. It is like the story of a plant which shoots up too soon, and cannot stand the frost, and on a certain night is struck by it and then withers. At first everything goes all right—he is with a teacher—as in a hot-house—he makes quick progress, but in Amsterdam he is almost alone, and with all his cleverness he cannot stand it there, and comes back home to his father quite discouraged, dissatisfied, listless—he paints a little there, and then dies of consumption or of some other disease in his twenty-eighth year.

What I do not like in him is that *while he paints* he complains about terrible dullness and idleness, as about something which he cannot help, and he continues to turn around in the, for him, too oppressive circle of friends, and in the amusements and way of living that bore him to death. In short, he is a sympathetic figure;

[1] A Dutch painter who died in his youth.

but I would rather read the life of Father Millet or of Th. Rousseau or of Daubigny.

To read Sensier's book on Millet gives one courage and that of Bilders makes one melancholy.

In a letter by Millet I often find an enumeration of difficulties, but still: "j'ai tout de même fait ceci ou cela," and then he always has in view other things which he absolutely wants to do and which he carries out.

And G. Bilders says too often: "I was blue this week and have been making a mess of things—and I have been to this or that concert or theatre, but came home still more miserable than I went."

What strikes me in Millet is that simple: "after all, I must do this or that."

Bilders is very witty, and can complain in a most humorous way about "manilla's pointus"—which he likes and which he cannot buy—about tailors' bills, which he sees no chance of paying. He describes his anxiety about money affairs so humorously that he himself and the reader must laugh about it.

But no matter in how witty a way these things may be told, I dislike them, and have more respect for the private difficulties of Millet who says: "il faut tout de même de la soupe pour les enfants," and he does not speak about "manilla's pointus" or about amusements. What I want to say is this: In his view of life Gerard Bilders was romantic and never got over the illusions perdues, and I for my part think it in a certain way an advantage that I started only when the romantic illusions were behind me. I must make up for lost time now. I must work hard, but just when one has left the lost illusions behind, work becomes a necessity and one of the few pleasures that are left. And that gives a great quiet and calmness.

I regret that it will be perhaps a year before you will see all my paintings (even though I might send you something now and then) and before we can talk things over. I assure you that the things I have painted now will prove useful to me. Perhaps I shall succeed now in what did not succeed in January. The reason why I enjoy painting so much is not its agreeable aspect, but it gives me light in different questions of tone and form and material, before which up to now I stood helpless, and now by means of painting I can

attempt them. I also see a better chance now of getting results with charcoal. Please do not suspect me of indifference about earning money; I aim at trying the nearest way to that end.

If only those means of earning money be real and lasting, which I for myself can only see in the future on condition that there be some real good in my work, not by working exclusively on saleableness—one has to suffer for that afterwards—but by sincere study from nature.

If you saw from my painting, that would have the most chance I would of course not refuse to paint more. But if it would last a long time before it became saleable, I would be the first to say: we must meanwhile practise the greatest economy, and, by drawing, many expenses are avoided and one makes solid though slow progress. I see in these painted things a change, and I write it to you, because you can tell better than I can what relation this may have to the eventual saleableness. It seems to me that the painted studies are *at all events more pleasant of aspect* than my drawings.

I for my part attach less value to the more pleasant, less meagre effect, and the aim I want to reach lies in the expression of more severe and virile things, for which I shall have to drudge a great deal still.

But if you would say: work on those landscapes or wood-scenes or marines, that would not prevent larger or more serious things, and I would have nothing against it. I only should want the assurance that they are worth the brushes, the paint and the canvas, and that it is not throwing money away to make them, but that they are worth the cost.

In that case I would even work on them with great ambition. I will begin by letting them ripen a little more, by finishing them more. Then in a few months, for instance, I will again send you something and we can see.

I believe most of the painters have eventually succeeded in this way.

I should not want to make things that were in principle bad, untrue, and of false conception, because I love nature too much. But this is the question: in order to reach something higher and better I must still make many studies. What will be the most profitable, to draw those studies or to paint them?

If the painted ones are unsaleable, then certainly it will be more advantageous to draw with charcoal or so. But if it were possible to make good the expenses of painted studies, then I want to tell you that in principle I have nothing against it, now that I see that they turn out rather well, and they may perhaps become a source of good fortune.

In principle I am only against spending paint on things which one can learn just as well in another way, when there is as yet no question of selling them.

I should not want to cause either myself or you expenses that are unnecessary, but I clearly see that the painted things have a more pleasant aspect. This makes me doubt what to do. My money is not quite gone, but what I have left is not much. It is to-day the 20th if I am not mistaken; for household expenses I have used this month rather less than more than usual. It is true I have had to spend a good deal on painting material, but much of this will last quite awhile. But it is true that everything is very expensive. I hope you will be able to send something soon. Receive a hearty handshake in thought and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

I heartily hope that you will not consider this letter as if I had already the pretension of thinking these first studies saleable. Formerly I could tell better than now what things were worth, whether they were saleable or not; now I notice daily that I do not know it any more, and it is for me more important to study nature than to study the prices of pictures.

But I think I see that the painted studies have a much more agreeable aspect than either those drawn in black and white, or the water-colours you saw lately. And therefore I am in doubt as to whether it might possibly be after all more profitable to make painting absolutely the principal thing, notwithstanding the greater expense.

I would rather you decided this than I, because I think you are more competent than I to judge the financial success, and I absolutely trust your judgment to be right. You told me to try and finish a little drawing in water-colour. I believe that just by painting I shall be able to make better water-colours than before,

if I start them again. But if that might not succeed well, you must not become discouraged, neither must I, and you must not be afraid to criticize me. I do not systematically ignore criticism, but it generally takes more time to change a thing than to indicate a change.

So I have now put into practice things that Mauve told me in January. And, for instance, I painted that piece of ground according to a conversation I had with him about a study of his.

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Dear Theo, Sunday morning.

I just received your very welcome letter, and as I want to take some rest to-day I answer it at once. Many thanks for it and for the enclosure, and for the things you tell me.

And for your description of that scene with the workmen at Montmartre, which I found very interesting, as you describe the colours too, so that I can see it: many thanks for it. I am glad you are reading the book about Gavarni. I thought it very interesting, and it made me love him twice as much.

Paris and its surroundings may be beautiful, but here we have nothing to complain of either.

This week I painted something which I think would give you the impression of Scheveningen as we saw it when we walked there together: A large study of sand, sea and sky—a big sky of delicate grey and warm white, with a little spot of soft blue gleaming through—the sand and the sea, light—so that the whole becomes blonde, but animated by the strong and bright-coloured figures and fishing smacks, that become full of tone. The subject of the sketch I made of it is, a fishing smack with its anchor raised. The horses are ready to be hitched to it and then to draw the boat into the water. Enclosed I send you a little sketch of it. It was a hard job. I wish I had painted it on a panel or on canvas. I tried to bring more colour into it, namely, depth, firmness of colour. How curious it is that you and I often seem to have the same thoughts. Yesterday evening, for instance, I came home from the wood with a study, and the whole week and especially then, I had

been deeply absorbed in that question of depth of colour. And I would have liked to have talked it over with you, especially as regards the study I made, and, look here, in your letter of this morning you accidentally speak about being struck on Montmartre by the strong vivid colours, which yet remained harmonious.

I do not know if it was exactly the same thing that struck us both, but I know well that you would have certainly also felt what struck me so particularly, and probably you would have seen it also in the same way. I begin by sending you a little sketch of the subject and will tell you what it was about.

The wood is becoming quite autumnal—there are effects of colour which I but rarely find painted in the Dutch pictures.

Yesterday evening I was busy painting a rather sloping ground in the wood, covered with mouldered and dry beech leaves. That ground was light and dark reddish brown, made more so by the casting shadows of trees which threw streaks over it more or less dark, sometimes half blotted out. The question was, and I found it very difficult, to get the depth of colour, the enormous force and solidness of that ground—and while painting it I only for the first time perceived how much light there was still in that darkness—to keep that light, and to keep at the same time the glow and depth of that rich colour.

For you cannot imagine any carpet so splendid as that deep brownish red, in the glow of an autumn evening sun, tempered by the trees.

From that ground young beech trees spring up which catch light on one side and are sparkling green there, and the shadowy side of those stems are warm deep black-green.

Behind those saplings, behind that brownish red soil, is a sky very delicate, bluish grey, warm, hardly blue, all aglow,—and against it is still a hazy border of green and a network of little stems and yellowish leaves. A few figures of wood gatherers are wandering around like dark masses of mysterious shadows. The white cap of a woman who is bending to reach a dry branch, stands out all of a sudden against the deep red brown of the ground. A skirt catches the light—a casting shadow falls—a dark silhouette of a man appears above the underbrush. A white bonnet, a cap, a shoulder, the bust of a woman moulds itself against the sky. Those figures, they are large and full of poetry—in the twilight

of that deep shadowy tone they appear as enormous *terres cuites* in moulding in a studio.

I describe nature to you; in how far I rendered the effect in my sketch, I do not know myself; but this I know, that I was struck by the harmony of green, red, black, yellow, blue, brown, grey.—It was very de Groux-like, an effect for instance like that sketch of Le départ du conscript, formerly in the ducal palace.

To paint it was a hard job. I used for the ground one large tube and a half of white—yet that ground is very dark—further red, yellow, brown ochre, black, terra sienna, bistre, and the result is a reddish brown, but one that varies from bistre to deep wine red, and even a pale blonde ruddiness. Then there is still the moss on the ground, and a border of fresh grass, which catches light and sparkles brightly, and is very difficult to get. There you have at last a sketch which I maintain has some significance, and which expresses something, no matter what may be said about it.

While painting it I said to myself: I must not go away before there is something of an autumn evening feeling in it, something mysterious, something serious.

But as this effect does not stay, I must paint quickly—the figures are painted in at once by a few strong strokes with a firm brush. It struck me how firmly those little stems were rooted in the ground. I began them with a brush, but because the ground was already so sticky—a brush-stroke was lost in it—then I squeezed the roots and trunks in from the tube, and modelled it a little with the brush.

Yes,—now they stand there rising from the ground, strongly rooted in it. In a certain way I am glad I have not *learned* painting, because then I might have *learned* to pass by such effects as this. Now I say no,—this is just what I want, if it is impossible, it is impossible; I will try it, though I do not know how it must be done. How I paint it *I do not know myself*. I sit down with a white board before the spot that strikes me, I look at what is before me, I say to myself that white board must become something, I come back dissatisfied,—I put it away, and when I have rested a little, I go to look at it with a kind of fear. Then I am still dissatisfied, because I have still too clearly in my mind that splendid nature, to be satisfied with what I made of it. But after all I find in my work an echo of what struck me. I see that nature has told me

something, has spoken to me, and that I have put it down in shorthand. In my shorthand there may be words that cannot be deciphered, there may be mistakes or gaps, but there is something in it of what wood or beech or figure has told me, and it is not a tame or conventional language, proceeding not from nature itself but from a studied manner or a system.

Enclosed another little sketch from the dunes. Small bushes are standing there, the leaves of which are white on one side and dark green on the other and constantly rustle and glitter.

You see I am absorbed with all my strength in painting; I am absorbed in colour—until now I have restrained myself, and I am not sorry for it. If I had not drawn so much, I would not be able to catch and get hold of a figure that looks like an unfinished *terre cuite*. But now I feel myself on the high sea—the painting must be continued with all the strength I can give to it.

When I paint on panel or canvas the expenses increase again. Everything is so expensive, the paint is also expensive, and is so soon gone. Well, those are difficulties all painters have. We must see what can be done. I know for sure that I have an instinct for colour, and that it will come to me more and more, that painting is in the very bone and marrow of me. Doubly and twice doubly I appreciate your helping me so faithfully and strongly. I think so often of you. I want my work to become firm, serious, manly, and that you too will get satisfaction from it as soon as possible.

One thing I want to call your attention to, as being of importance. Would it not be possible to get colours, panels, brushes, etc., *wholesale?* Now I must pay the retail price. Are you in connection with Paillard or the like? If so, I think it would be very much cheaper to buy wholesale—white, ochre, terra sienna, for instance, and we could then arrange about the money. It would of course be much cheaper. Think it over if you like. Good painting does not depend upon using much colour, but in order to paint a ground with force, or to keep a sky clear, one must sometimes not spare a tube.

Sometimes the subject requires a delicate painting, sometimes the material, the nature of the things themselves requires a thick painting. Mauve, who in comparison with J. Maris, and still more in comparison with Millet or Jules Dupré, paints very soberly, has in the corners of his studio cigar boxes full of empty tubes, which

are as numerous as the empty bottles in the corner of the rooms after a dinner or soirée, as Zola describes it for instance. Well, if there can be a little extra this month, that will be delightful. If not, it will be all right, too. I shall work as hard as I can. You inquire after my health, but how is yours. I am inclined to believe that my remedy would be yours also—to be in the open air, to paint. I am well, but when I am tired I still feel it. However, it is getting better instead of worse. I think it a good thing that I live as soberly as possible, but painting is my special remedy. I heartily hope that you are having good luck and that you will find still more. A hearty handshake in thought and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

You see there is in the sketch of the marine, a blonde tender effect, and in the wood there is a more gloomy serious tone. I am glad both exist in life.

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Dear Theo,

A few words to congratulate you on the 10th of September.[1] I do not know if I have already told you that I had a letter from Willemien, who describes very prettily the country around Nuenen.

It seems to be very beautiful there.

I have asked her for some particulars about the weavers, who interest me very much. I saw them at the time when I was in the Pas de Calais—it was indescribably beautiful. However, I need not paint weavers as yet, though I certainly hope to do so sooner or later.

It is autumn now in the woods, that quite absorbs me.

There are two things in autumn that particularly appeal to me.

There is sometimes a soft melancholy in the falling leaves, in the tempered light, in the haziness of things, in the elegance of the slender stems.

But I also love the other, more sturdy and rude, side—those strong light effects, for instance, on a man who stands digging and

[1] Their mother's birthday.

perspiring in the midday sun. Enclosed a few sketches of studies I made this week.

I was thinking again about those workmen on Montmartre which you describe in your last letter. I knew there was somebody who had made those things remarkably well.

I mean A. Lançon. I looked over his woodcuts in my collection —how clever that man is—I found among them a "Rendezvous des Chiffonniers," "A Distribution of Soup," "Balayeurs de Neige," which I think are splendid, and he is so very productive they seem to drop out of his sleeve.

Speaking of woodcuts, I found this week some beautiful new ones

from "l'Illustration." It is a series by Paul Renouard: Les prisons de Paris; what beautiful things there are among them.

At night when I cannot sleep, which often happens, I always look with renewed pleasure at the woodcuts.

Another famous draughtsman is G. Mahoney, who illustrated the Household edition by Dickens.

I think that painting will teach me to interpret the light better, which would bring a great change in my drawings too.

How many difficulties must be overcome before one can express something, but in those very difficulties lies the spur.

Enclosed another sketch from the woods. I made a large study of it.

I feel in myself such a creative power that I am conscious the time will arrive when, so to speak, I will daily and regularly make a good thing.

But very rarely a day passes that I do not make something, though it is not yet the real thing I want to make.

Well, sometimes it seems to me that I might soon become productive. I would not be at all surprised if it should happen some day.

I feel that at all events painting will rouse indirectly other things in me too.

Look, for instance, at this little sketch of the potato market on the North Wall. That bustling of the workmen and the women,

with the baskets that are loaded from the boat, is very curious to notice. Those are the things which I should want to draw and paint vigorously—the life and movement in such a scene, and the types of the people. But I am not surprised that I cannot do it at once, and that when I try it I have often failed up till now. By painting I will certainly become more proficient with the colours and better able to paint such a subject. Well to have patience and to work on, that is the question. I send you the little sketch, I make a lot of them in this way, just to tell you that for instance such things as that scene of the workmen on Montmartre, indeed, preoccupy me too. A general knowledge of figure is needed for it, which I try to acquire by drawing large figure studies.

And if I continue to do so, I certainly believe that I will learn to express the bustle of labourers on the street or on the fields. It

is such a curious place where I saw that potato market. All the poor people from the Geest, from the Ledig Erf, and all those places in the neighbourhood, come running out. There are always such scenes—one time it is a boat with peat, then one with fish, then with coal or something or other.

I have a great many sketches from Ireland by English artists. I think that neighbourhood about which I write to you must be very much like an Irish town. I always try my best to work with full strength, for my greatest desire is to make beautiful things. But the making of beautiful things costs trouble and disappointment and perseverance. I enclose another view of the wood in the evening after the rain. I cannot tell you how splendid that effect was in nature, with the green turned to bronze, and here and there the fallen leaves.

I wish you could walk here some evening in that splendid autumn wood. What I will bring back from it this year will be but a scanty harvest. However, I hope to bring a few things, and it will grow more and more in time.

Meanwhile, all my paint has been used up. I heartily hope that you yourself are not hard up. But at all events I hope you will send the usual allowance about the 10th of September. This afternoon I must go again to the potato market. To paint there is impossible because of the people; already they give me trouble enough. I wish one could have free access to the houses and sit down before the windows, without any ceremonies. Well, it is Saturday evening, and so there is certainly something typical going on worth noticing. I wish you all good luck, know that I think of you daily. Adieu, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

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Dear Theo,

I just received your letter and the enclosed fr. 50, for which my hearty thanks. Enclosed again a few small water-colours.

As you remember, when you were here you spoke about my trying to send you some day a little drawing of the kind which is

called "saleable." However, you must excuse my not knowing exactly when a drawing is, and when it is not, of that kind. In former times I think I knew, but now I perceive daily that I am mistaken.

Well, I hope this little bench, though perhaps not saleable yet, will show you that I am not averse to sometimes choosing subjects that are pleasant or agreeable, and as such will find amateurs sooner than things of a more gloomy sentiment.

I enclose with the little bench another one as *pendant*, also a bit of the wood. I have struck in the little bench after the larger water-colour I have on hand, in which there are deeper tones, but I do not know whether I shall succeed in finishing it well; the other sketch is after a painted study.

Now I should like to hear from you if this little drawing is more or less of the kind we spoke about. I send it to you because I would not want you to think I had forgotten it, but afterwards I hope to send you some better things.

You remember I wrote you in my last letter that I was going to that potato market.

I brought home many sketches then, it was extraordinarily curious—but it may serve as an example of the politeness of the Hague public towards painters—that all at once a fellow from behind me or probably from out a window, spat his quid of tobacco on my paper,—well, one has trouble enough sometimes. But one need not take it so very seriously; those people are not bad, but they do not understand anything about it, and probably think I am a lunatic, when they see me making a drawing with large hooks and crooks which don't mean anything to them.

I am also very busy of late drawing horses in the street. I would love to have a horse for a model some time. So I heard yesterday someone behind me say : that is a queer sort of a painter—he draws the hind part of the horse instead of drawing it from the front. I rather liked that comment.

I love to make those sketches on the street, and as I wrote you in my last letter, I certainly want to reach a sort of perfection in it.

Do you know an American magazine called "Harper's Monthly"? There are wonderful sketches in it. I myself only know it slightly. I have only seen six numbers, and possess only three of them. But there are things in it which strike me dumb with admiration, among others, "Glass-Works" and "Steel-Works," all scenes from factories.

And also sketches from a Quaker town in the olden days by Howard Pyle.

I am full of new pleasure in those things, because I have new hope of making things myself that have soul in them. What you write about the money that you loaned and did not get back is indeed a calamity. I have to pay for some paint still, and have to buy more, so that by the 20th of September I will certainly be à court. But I will vary the work a little, and try to make both ends meet.

But know that a little extra money will help me to make extra progress—more than otherwise would be the case.

One needs so many things and everything is so expensive. But, at all events, I am doubly thankful to you, and feel myself so much happier than others because of the money I receive from you; and I assure you that I try very hard to make progress.

To-day I go once more to the usual Monday's market, to try and make some sketches, when they are pulling down the stands.

Adieu, good luck in everything, write to me soon and know that I always love to read such a description like that of Montmartre.

I am daubing so in paint that there is even paint on this letter. I am busy with the large water-colour of the bench.

I wish that it would turn out well, but the great trouble is to keep the correct form together with depth of tone, and to keep it clear is very difficult.

Once more adieu, a handshake in thought, and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

I thank you very much for sending me the money when you yourself are so very hard up. I doubly need it because autumn will be over so soon, and it is the most beautiful season for painting.

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Dear Theo,

The weeks pass quickly and it is again Sunday.

During these days I have been often in Scheveningen, and one evening I just hit the curious moment of the coming in of a fishing smack. Near the monument is a little wooden shed in which a man sits on the look-out. As soon as the boat came in view, the fellow appeared with a large blue flag and followed by a crowd of little children who just reached to his knees. It was apparently a great pleasure for them to stand near the man with the flag, and I suppose they fancied they were helping the fishing smack to come in. A few minutes after the man had waved his flag, a fellow on an old horse arrived who had to go and fetch the anchor.

Then the group was joined by several men and women,—among them mothers with children,—to welcome the crew. When the boat was near enough the man on horseback went into the water and came back with the anchor.

Then the men were brought ashore on the backs of fellows with high rubber boots, and with each new arrival there was a great cheer of welcome.

When they were all ashore the whole troop marched home like a flock of sheep or like a caravan with the man on the camel—I mean the man on the horse—towering over them like a tall spectre. Of course I tried to sketch most carefully the various incidents.

I have also painted part of it, namely, the group of which I enclose a little sketch.

Then I painted another study of a marine, nothing but a bit of sand, sea, sky—grey and lonely. I sometimes long for that quiet, where there is nothing but the grey sea,—with a solitary sea bird —save that, no other voice but the roaring of the waves. It gives me a change from the noisy rumour of the Geest or the potato market.

For the rest I have been working this week on sketches for water-colours. The large one of the bench I also carried on further, and then I made a sketch of women in the garden of the hospital, and part of the Geest.

You see from the enclosed sketch what I want to make—groups of people who are in action some way or other.

But how difficult it is to bring life and movement into it, and to put the figures in their places and apart from each other. It is that great question, *moutonner :* groups of figures forming one whole, but of which the heads or shoulders of one rise above the other, while in the foreground the legs of the first figures stand out strongly, and somewhat higher the skirts and trousers form again a kind of confusion in which the lines are still quite visible. Then to the right or to the left, according to the point of view, the greater or lesser extension or shortening of the sides. As to composition, all possible scenes with figures—either a market or the arrival of a boat, a group of people in line at the soup kitchen, in the waiting-room of the station, the hospital, the pawnshop . . . groups talking in the street or walking around—are based on that same principle of the flock of sheep, from which certainly the word moutonner is derived, and it all depends on the same questions of light and brown and perspective. The effect of the chestnut trees which you describe in your last letter is here too, as you will have

seen from the drawing of the little bench, but here just very little of the new green leaves is still visible, though some time ago I also noticed it, here they are withered by the many storms.

We soon get here the general real falling of the leaves, and then especially I hope to paint many studies of the wood, and also of the beach, for though there are no effects of autumn leaves there, the peculiar light of autumn evenings has its own effect, and in this time of the year it is doubly beautiful there as everywhere.

Am rather short of colours and other things, but you know how it is, I can vary my work in different ways, and there are always so many things to draw. For—the group of figures in the enclosed sketch varies infinitely and requires innumerable separate studies and sketches of each figure, which one must grasp quickly in the street. In that way it gets character and importance. Lately I made a study of ladies and gentlemen on the beach, a bustling crowd of people.

I should love to make sooner or later, after some more study, drawings for illustration. Perhaps one thing will follow from the other. The question is to continue to work. I heartily hope you are well, and that you will write me about yourself and the things that strike you in your surroundings. Adieu, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

I am so afraid that you are in trouble about what you wrote me, and I hope things will arrange themselves.

You see from the little sketch that I have started the thing about which I spoke in my last letter, namely, regularly to fix the scenes of working people, of fishermen, which strike me, either drawing or painting them, and these are the very things which, with some practice, might serve as illustration I think.

Of course the types must be carried up higher for that purpose.

I made about ten different sketches of the coming in of the fishing smack, also about the raising of the anchor, which I sent you in my last letter.

Dear Theo,

When you were here we spoke about that little drawing in question which I would send you, in consequence of which I then sent you the one of the little bench. To show you that I myself seriously intend to work on in that style, I send you enclosed a few little sketches.

I am making a water-colour of the flocks of orphans with their spiritual shepherd, which probably will not succeed well enough to be saleable.

But to show you that it is not so easy to get the figures in with some character, and that I am trying hard to overcome that difficulty, I send you also sketches of studies of the figure which I recently made, and which are of course more complete than these sketches.

Had I remained on good footing with Mauve, I think that if I had made a water-colour like that of the little bench, or now the one of these orphans, he would have pointed out to me some things which would have made it saleable, and which would have given it quite a different aspect.

Even with the water-colours or pictures of many a painter, it

is so that another painter works in it—sometimes even quite changes it.

That is what I am missing now—but though I do not decidedly disapprove of it, when more experienced painters either make suggestions or work in it themselves (especially because it is so necessary for the younger ones to earn money in order to be able to keep it up), I think it is not exactly a misfortune to struggle on alone.

What one learns from own experience is not learned so quickly but it is impressed more deeply.

I went to see the drawings in the Gothic Hall; those by Rochussen I thought splendid. It was a thing from the time of Napoleon: French officers in an old town-hall, who seem to ask for papers and information of the mayor and town council.

It was so typical, that little old mayor and then those generals, exactly like, for instance, Erckmann-Chatrian describes it in "Madame Thérèse." I enjoyed it immensely. There were also very beautiful things by Allebé,[1] drawings from the Zoological garden, and a landscape with fir trees on the rocks by the sea shore, through which one sees in the valley a fisherman's cottage. There were beautiful town and beach views with small figures by Hoeterinks. But however much I like his present drawings, it seems to me a pity that he didn't stick to his first manner, when he made types from the people (for instance, a picture "Le Mont de Piété").

It is with drawing as it is with writing: When a child learns to write, it seems almost impossible to him that he will ever learn it, and it seems almost a miracle to see the teacher write so quickly. But nevertheless in time every child learns it. And I really believe one must learn to draw so that it becomes as easy as writing, and that one must know the proportions as well and learn to see so correctly that one can reproduce whatever one sees on a larger or smaller scale. We have very beautiful bad weather here at present, rain, wind, thunder, but with splendid effects; that's why I like it, but for the rest it is rather chilly. The time for working in the open air is drawing to an end, and the question is to profit as much as possible before the winter comes on.

Towards winter I will clear up the studio,—that is, I will take

[1] Dutch painter.

away the studies from the walls and remove everything that stands in the way—so that I shall have plenty of room to work with the model. I feel that I need a great many studies of the figure—also of Scheveningen fisherwomen. Sometime I should like to get back some of the studies you have and which you do not care to keep (of course if there is an opportunity of sending them). If there is anything you want to keep, if there is anything I have here you would like to have, just say so, for I count everything to belong to you. If I ask it back it is because what is made directly from the model is often necessary, for instance for water-colours. But there is no hurry, only do not throw them away, even though they are not so very well done, for everything may be of use. I do not think I am mistaken in believing that being and remaining productive depend on the studies one has and continues to make.

The more variety there is in them, the more one drudges on them, the easier one works afterwards when it comes to the making of real pictures or drawings. In short, I reckon the studies to be the seed, and the more one sows the more one may hope to reap.

Lately I read "Les Deux Frères," by Erckmann-Chatrian and I liked it. It must have been a pleasant time when there were so many artists in the Alsace—Brion, Marshal, Jundt, Vautier, Knaus, Schüler, Sall, v. Muyden and a great many more,—together with many others who worked in the same line, like Chatrian and Auerbach. I myself like them better than Tapiro or Capibianchi, or those hordes of other Italians that seem to multiply for ever.

Adieu, believe me, with a handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

233

Dear Theo,

While I write to you I am almost at the end of my last guilder. Well, I hope to hear from you soon, but taking into consideration what you wrote me lately, I think it very possible that perhaps you will not be able to send the usual amount on the 20th. In that case I beg you to send whatever you can spare more or less, be it only a small part of it. Friday afternoon I have a model, a

man from the workhouse, and I shouldn't like to send him away without his money.

I had some extra expense because my painting box got broken when I had to jump from a high bank and collect my belongings as quickly as possible, in order to get out of the way of a horse that had bolted outside the Rhine station where they are loading coal.

It is very beautiful there. I had to ask permission to paint there, as it is not public ground, and I hope to work there often now.

On that occasion I painted there the heaps of coal where the men were at work, and where a horse and wagon were standing.

Then I made another study of a small yard with a grass plot and sunflowers.

It is beautiful outside now—the leaves have all kinds of bronze colours—green, yellow, reddish—everything warm and rich.

How I wish you could see all my studies together. Since your visit the studio already has a different aspect. I have had many expenses, that is true, but the walls are now full of painted studies.

That little yard and those heaps of coal were so splendid that I couldn't keep my hands off, though I had intended to draw this week because of the expenses. I would love to have such things in my studio—that is what I am working for—which remind me of the country every morning when I see them. So that I know immediately what to do that day—and at once have a mind to do something, or feel I just must go here or there.

As to sending you a painted study some day, I have not the slightest objection, but before I do so we must agree on a few things.

Somebody like Mauve—or any other artist—certainly has his particular colour scheme, but nobody gets that all at once, and in studies made in the open air it doesn't show so directly, even with painters who are much more experienced than I am.

For instance, the studies of Mauve, which I for myself like very much, just because of their soberness and because they are done so faithfully. Still they miss a certain charm, which the pictures that result from them possess in such a high degree.

With me it is so that, for instance, the marine which I recently brought home is already quite different in colour from the first or second I made.

So you should not judge my palette as yet from what I might send you now.

And if I myself would rather wait to send you until it has become riper, it is because I believe that my colour will change a great deal, and the composition too.

So that is the first reason, and the second is that studies made in the open air are different from pictures that are destined to be brought before the public.

The latter, according to my opinion, result from the studies, but yet they may or even must differ a great deal from them.

For in the picture the painter rather gives a personal idea, and in a study his aim is simply to analyse a bit of nature—either to make his idea or conception more correct, or to find a new idea. Thus studies belong more to the studio than among the public, and must not be considered from the same point of view as the pictures. Well, I think you will look at it in the same way, and take these things into consideration of your own accord.

But write to me some time what you want me to do, and know that I will do what you think best, either send or not send.

But what I should like best of all is that you could see everything together. Is there any possibility of your coming again this winter?

If such were so I would certainly think it better not to send. Enfin. But I will certainly mind and keep in view whatever you may say about the work as to its saleableness, and do not think I slight your opinion.

I consider the making of studies as sowing and the making of pictures as reaping.

I believe one gets more sound ideas when the thoughts arise from direct contact with things, than when one looks at them with the set purpose of finding certain facts in them.

It is the same with the question of the colour scheme. There are colours that harmonize together wonderfully, but I try my best to make it as I see it before I set to work to make it as I feel it. And yet feeling is a great thing, and without it one would not be able to do anything.

Sometimes I am longing for the harvest time, that means for the time when I shall be so imbued with the study of nature that I myself shall create something in a picture. However, that analysing of things is no trouble to me, nor is it a thing that I do

not like to do. It is already late. I did not sleep well these last nights. It is all that beautiful autumn scenery and the desire to profit by it that I have on my mind.

But I wish I *could* sleep when it is time, and I try my best for it, for it makes me nervous, but there is no help for it. How do you feel? I hope you do not have too many cares, for that doesn't improve one's health. I think if I were not so much in the open air and found less pleasure in my painting, I would soon become melancholy. But to be in the open air and to work with animation are things which renew and keep up our strength. It is only at times when I am over-tired that I feel thoroughly miserable, but for the rest I believe I will regain my health.

Adieu, a handshake in thought, and write to me what I must do, send you a painted study or not yet. And know that I think of you every day and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

234

Dear Theo, Monday morning.

I received your last letter and the enclosure in good order and heartily thank you for it. I was and am even now rather hard up, that is to say in regard to painting. There are so many, many expenses.

This is partly because so many things that I start become a failure, and then one has to begin anew, and all the trouble has been in vain except that this is after all the way to make progress and that one must persevere.

In your last letter there was no answer to what I asked you about, the sending or not sending of the painted studies. Perhaps you forgot all about it. So I thought that after all it is not a question of real importance, and to-day I send you by mail a painted study. But as I told you in my last letter, of course I would much rather that you could see them all together, and of course you cannot judge the future from this one, as I have been handling the brush for too short a time not to expect still great changes.

I would rather send you another one than this, but the one I would like to send is not dry enough to be rolled.

Like myself, you will find much to criticize in the background. I can only give this explanation for it, that the study is made as a study of the foreground with the tree roots ; there was already so much work on them, and as usual I didn't sit quietly because of the passers-by, and when I had brought the study as far as you see it now, I couldn't stand it any longer.

You cannot imagine how disagreeable and tiring it is when people always stand so close around you.

Sometimes it makes me so nervous that I must give it up. So yesterday morning, though it was still very early and I had hoped to remain free, a study of the chestnut trees on the Bezuidenhout (that are so splendid), turned out all wrong for that reason. And people are sometimes so rude and impertinent. Well, but it is not only the disappointment it causes, but also the waste of materials.

Of course such things will not get the better of me, and I will overcome them just as other people do, but I feel I would reach my aim much more quickly if there were less of those little miseries. Now as regards this study: if when looking at it and knowing that I have many more beside it, you do not repent of having enabled me to make it, then I am satisfied and continue with good courage. If it is a disappointment to you, you must remember that it is but such a short time since I began painting. If it pleases you, so much the better for me, for I want so hard to send you something that gives you pleasure.

Now I must still tell you that I had quite unexpectedly a very pleasant visit from father, at my house and at the studio, this I think infinitely better than that he should hear about me through others.

If people come to see me, well, then their impression is at least original, but I do not like opinions that are founded on what people say.

I was really very glad to see father and to talk to him. I heard again a great deal about Nuenen, the churchyard with the old crosses. I cannot get it out of my head. I hope I shall be able to paint it some day.

I also heard a great deal about your visit, and that you gave them that engraving after Israëls, which greatly touched them.

I should have liked to send you also a marine, but the last one is not quite dry. The first one I might have sent, but since then I

have caught the colour of the sea better, and so I wait until one of the last ones is dry. I have painted of late much more than I originally intended and agreed with you. But perhaps it is necessary to keep on doing it if at all possible.

From Rappard I have just received a letter. I wish he lived a little more in the neighbourhood.

And know well that I shall like to hear your criticisms exactly as you think. I often feel the longing and the need to ask the advice of someone on different questions, but I do not give way to it, since what happened with Mauve, and I do not speak with painters about my work. Somebody may be ever so clever. Of what use is it to me when he speaks in a different way from the medium in which he works. I would rather that Mauve had told me about the use of body colour instead of saying " in no case must you use body colour," while he himself and all the others use it almost always and with the best results. Well, in many cases, one can find out things for oneself by and by, and that is what I try to do. Aye, if I could do exactly what I wanted, I would undertake painting on a still larger scale and especially with more models.

Between the times of painting I draw much from the figure.

In this study the figure is there only for the size, in order to be able to find the proportion of some other figure when I use this study.

Of course a real figure is quite different ; it has to be worked out much more.

Then it is also there to give a little accent.

So be sure, brother, I send you this only because, as you didn't write about it, I didn't know what to do. Of course my intentions are quite different from this, and I send it you in the same way as I sometimes send you a little sketch, to give you an idea of what I am making.

Adieu, a handshake in thought. I send you all possible good wishes, and hope that your headache is not an evil that remains or returns at every moment. With me it is also more a feeling of uncomfortable fatigue than of excessive pain. With father I took a walk on the Ryswyk road ; it is very beautiful there. Again farewell, and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

If this one arrives in good condition this will be an easy way to send you things.

I do not know if one can send by mail drawings or pictures as printed matter.

Another thing, you understand that I could make some little branches, etc., different if I painted them anew; but in my opinion one mustn't change too much in studies which must be of use afterwards. They must be put up in the studio just as they come from the wood; for some people they may look less pleasant, but for the painter himself there is more of his own impression in them.

235

Dear Theo,

A few words to acknowledge the good receipt of your letter. I thank you heartily for the contents.

These last days I have made nothing but water-colours. Enclosed you will find a little scratch of a large one.

You remember perhaps in the beginning of the Spinstraat the office of the State lottery of Moorman? I passed there on a rainy morning when a crowd of people stood waiting to get their lottery tickets. They were for the greater part old women, and that kind of people of whom one cannot say what they are doing or how they live, but who apparently have a great deal of drudgery and trouble and care.

Of course, taken superficially, such a group of people who have apparently such great interests in "to-day's drawing," seem rather ridiculous to you and me, because neither you nor I care in the least for the lottery.

But that little group of people—their expression of waiting—struck me, and whilst I sketched it, it got for me a larger, deeper significance than at first.

For it gets more significance when one sees in it: the *poor and the money*. So it is often with almost all groups of figures: one must sometimes think it over before one understands what it all means. The curiosity and the illusion about the lottery seem more or less childish to us—but it become serious when one thinks of

the contrast of misery and that kind of utmost effort of the poor wretches to try to save themselves by buying a lottery ticket, paid with their last pennies which should have gone for food.

However it may be, I am making a large water-colour of it and then I am also making one of a church bench, which I saw in a little church on the Geest, where the people from the workhouse go (here they call them very expressively *orphan men* and *orphan women*).

Once again being engrossed in drawing, I sometimes think there is nothing so delightful as drawing.

This is a fragment of those benches; in the background there are still other heads of men.

Such things are very difficult, however, and do not succeed at

once. Their success is sometimes the final result of a whole series of failures.

Speaking about orphan men, I was interrupted in writing this letter by the arrival of my model.

And I worked with him until dark. He wears a large old overcoat, which gives him a curious broad figure, I think you would like this collection of old men in their Sunday and in their everyday clothes.

I also drew him sitting with a pipe. He has a curious bald head, large deaf ears and white whiskers.

This sketch I made at dusk, but I hope you will be able to distinguish the composition. Once put together, it is soon dashed off, and I do not say that it is put together as I should wish it.

HEDEN
TREKKING
Stanislaw
Horace Pippin

I should like to paint it with figures of a foot length or a little less and the composition a little more broadwise.

However, I do not know if I shall do so. I should need a large canvas for it, and if it fails there would have been already too many expenses.

Much though I should like to make it, I think if I continue to make types of figures, these things will follow of their own accord. They will naturally proceed then from the studies after the model, either in this or in another form, but in the same sentiment. More and more I begin to notice how useful and necessary it is to keep the studies after the model; though they may have less value for others, he who has made them finds the model back in it, and it reminds him vividly of things. When there is a chance please don't forget to send me back some of those old studies. I hope I shall be able to make better things with them by and by.

Of course in that group of figures of which I send you a sketch in black, there were beautiful things in colour : blue smocks and brown coats, white, black, yellowish, working-men's trousers, faded shawls, an overcoat green with age, white bonnets and black top-hats, muddy street stones and muddy boots, in contrast to pale faces or weather-beaten ones. And all this must be rendered in oil or water colour. It is a drudgery, I assure you.

I hope you will write again, but once more, thanks for the timely sending of the money which is so necessary in order to proceed vigorously.

Adieu, boy, a hearty handshake in thought and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

In the water-colour there is a little more foreground ; here the figures are too prominent and one cannot sufficiently command the foreground with the eye.

236

Dear Theo, Sunday.

Enclosed you will find a little sketch of a larger water-colour. I started also another with many more figures, the last summer guests on the beach—an evening effect.

I do not know whether I shall be able to carry it out, but we must do what we can and struggle on until we reach our aim. The large one of which I sent you a sketch in my last letter is progressing.

I am sure you would like the things which I am making now.

What you would notice at once like I do, is that *I need a lot of figure studies;* therefore I am working with all my strength and have a model almost daily.

I have made still more studies of the old men, and this week I hope to have also a woman from the asylum, but I am badly in need of some money; so many things are necessary. I also have to pay something to Stam.

Just fancy, I received this week to my great surprise a parcel from home, containing a winter coat, a pair of warm trousers and a warm woman's coat. It touched me very much.

I can't get out of my mind the churchyard with the wooden crosses. Perhaps I shall make some studies of it beforehand. I should like to make it in the snow—a peasant's burial or the like—in short, an *effect* like the enclosed sketch of miners. To complete the seasons, I send you a little sketch of the spring and another of the fall, which came in my mind whilst I was making the first.

How beautiful is it outside now! I try my best to seize the effects of autumn. I am writing you in a great hurry. I can assure you those compositions with figures are no joke and I am deep in my work. It is like weaving—one needs all one's attention to keep

the threads apart—one must manage to keep an eye on several things at once.

The little drawing of the beach is more finished than the others, because it has served me to make the large one, while the others are less water-colour.

Well, I heartily hope that your own pocket is not too empty. Nature is so beautiful these days that I must bring some of it on paper.

Adieu, write as soon as possible, and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

237

Dear Theo, Sunday afternoon.

Your letter and the enclosure were very welcome. I need hardly tell you so, it comes just in time and is of great help to me.

It is real autumn weather here, rainy and chilly, but full of sentiment, especially splendid for figures that stand out in tone against the wet streets and the roads in which the sky is reflected. It is what Mauve makes so often and so beautifully. So I have been able to work still on the larger water-colour of the crowd of people before the lottery office, and I also started another of the beach. Of which this is the composition—

I perfectly agree with what you said about there being times in our lives in which we seem deaf to nature or when nature doesn't seem to speak to us any more.

I often have that feeling, too, and sometimes it helps me then to undertake quite a different thing. When I have enough of landscape or effects of light I attack figures and vice versa. Sometimes one can do nothing but wait until it passes, but many a time I succeed in chasing that feeling of impassiveness by changing subjects. More and more, however, I become interested in figure.

I remember a former time when the feeling for landscape was very strong in me, and I was more impressed by a picture or drawing which rendered well an effect of light or sentiment of landscape, than by figure.

The painters of figure in general rather inspired me with a kind of cool respect than with warm sympathy.

However, I remember quite well having been very much impressed at that time by a drawing by Daumier, an old man under the chestnut trees in the Champs Elysées (an illustration for Balzac), though that drawing was not so very important. But I remember being so very much impressed at the time by something so strong and manly in Daumier's conception that I thought: it must be a good thing to think and to feel in that way, and to overlook or to pass by many things, in order to concentrate oneself on things that furnish food for thought, and that touch us as a human being more than meadows or clouds.

And so I feel always a great attraction for the figures either of the English draughtsmen or of the English authors, because of their Monday-morning-like soberness, and studied simplicity and prosaicness and analysis, as something solid and strong that can give us strength in days when we feel weak. So, among the French authors, the same for those of Balzac and Zola too.

I do not know the books by Murger which you mention, but I hope to become acquainted with them soon.

Did I tell you that I was reading Daudet's "Les Rois en Exil"? I rather like it.

The titles of those books are very attractive to me, for instance, "La Bohème." How far we have strayed nowadays from the Bohème of Gavarni's days. In my opinion there was at that time a more hearty and cheerful and lively feeling than now.

I do not know it for certain. There is much good in our days too, or there might be more than is actually the case if there were more good fellowship.

From the window of my studio I see just now a beautiful effect. The city, with its towers and roofs and smoking chimneys, stands out as a dark sombre silhouette against the horizon of light. This light is, however, but a broad streak, above which hangs a dark cloud concentrated at the bottom, but at the top torn asunder by the autumn wind in large tufts which are driven away. That streak of light, however, makes the wet roofs glisten here and there in the dark mass of the city (in a drawing one would indicate it by a streak of body colour), and enables one to distinguish between red tiles and slates, though the whole mass has but one tone. The Schenkweg runs through the foreground like a shining streak through the water; the poplars have yellow leaves; the banks of the ditches and the meadows are a deep green; the little figures are black.

I would draw it or rather try to draw it if I hadn't been busy drawing the whole afternoon figures of men who carried peat, and my mind is still too full of them to have room left for any new thing.

I long for you so much and think of you so often. What you tell me about the character of some artists in Paris, who live with women, are less narrow-minded than others, perhaps try desperately to retain a youthful air, I think perfectly well observed. Such people exist there and here. There it is perhaps even more difficult than here to keep some freshness in one's domestic life, because there it is even more rowing against the current. How many have become desperate in Paris,—calmly, rationally, logically and rightly desperate. I just read something of the kind about Tassaert, whom I like very much, and it pains me that such was the case with him.

For that very reason I think that every effort in that direction is worthy of respect. I also believe that it may happen that one succeeds, and one must not begin to despair, even though one is defeated here and there, and even though one feels sometimes a kind of decay, it is necessary to take heart again and new courage, even though things go differently than one at first expected. You must not think that I look down with disdain on persons like those you describe because of their lives not being founded on serious

and premeditated principles. My opinion about this is the following, the result must be a *deed*, not an abstract idea.

I only then approve of principles and think them worth while when they develop into actions, and I think it well to reflect and to try to be conscientious, because this strengthens a man's energy and joins his different actions to a whole. Those people whom you describe would, I think, get more firmness if they premeditated more what they do, but for the rest I prefer them far above those people who air their principles without taking the least trouble or even thinking of putting them into practice. For the latter have no use for their most beautiful principles, and the former are just the people who, if they begin to live with energy and reflection, might fulfil something great. For the great things are not done only by impulse, but are a series of small things brought together. What is drawing? How does one learn it? It is working through an invisible iron wall that seems to stand between what one *feels* and what one *can do*. How must one get through that wall—as pounding against it is of no use? One must undermine that wall and file through it slowly and patiently, according to my opinion, and, look here—how can one continue such a work assiduously without being disturbed or distracted from it, unless one reflects and regulates one's life according to principles? And as it is with the artistic side, so it is with other things. And great things are not something accidental but certainly must be *willed*. Whether originally in a man the actions must lead to principles or the principles to actions, is something which seems to me irresolvable, and as little worth to be decided as the question which was first, the hen or the egg. But I consider it to be very positive and of great value that one must try to develop one's power of reflection and will.

I am very curious to know whether you will find something in the figures I am making now, when you will see them sooner or later. That is also a question like that of the hen and the egg—must one make figures when first a composition is found, or must one combine the separate figures to a composition that follows from them?

I think that the result will be pretty much the same if only one *works*. I finish with the same thing with which you finish your letter, that we both have in common a liking to look behind the scenes in a theatre, or, in other words, that we both have an inclina-

tion to analyse things. It is, I believe, just the quality one needs for painting—in painting or drawing one must exert that power. It may be that to some extent nature must have endowed one with a gift (but you certainly have got it and so have I—perhaps we are indebted for that to our childhood in Brabant and to surroundings that contributed more than is usually the case to teach us to think) but it is especially later that the artistic feeling develops itself and ripens by work. I do not know *how* you might become a very good painter, but that it is in you and might develop I certainly believe.

Adieu, boy, thanks for what you send me and a hearty handshake,

Yours,

Vincent.

My little stove is burning already. Oh, lad, how I wish we could sit together some evening to look at the drawings and sketches and woodcuts. I have a splendid new one.

This week I hope to get some boys from the orphanage to pose for me, then I would perhaps be able to save that drawing of the group of orphans.

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Dear Theo,

Your letter and its contents, literal as well as financial, were very welcome, and I heartily thank you for it. In the first place I was especially glad to hear that perhaps it will not be so very long before you come once more to Holland. As soon as it will be possible for you to decide whether it will be before or after New Year I should like very much to know. Am very glad that you dispatched the studies. I feel it so strongly these days whilst I am making many new ones, that I must try to keep together my studies after the model. How delightful it would be if I could consult more with you about the work, but we are too far from each other.

Recently I saw, and I have it also in my collection, a large woodcut after a picture by Roll, "Une Grève de Charbonniers." You know that painter perhaps, and if so, what have you seen of his work? This one represents the entrance to a mine, before which are groups of men and women and children who apparently have

stormed the building. They are standing or sitting around an overturned cart, and are subdued by mounted police. One fellow is throwing a stone, but a woman tries to seize his arm. The characters are excellent, and it is drawn roughly and vigorously, and I am sure it is certainly painted quite in accordance with the nature of the subject. It is not like Knaus or Vautier, but done with more passion, as it were—hardly any details, everything massed and simplified—but there is great style in it. There is much expression and sentiment and feeling, and the movements of the figures—the different actions—are expressed in a masterly way. I was greatly impressed by it, and so was Rappard, to whom I also sent one. It was in the Illustration, but in an old number.

By chance I have another one of an English draughtsman, Emslie, whose subject is men who go down in a mine to assist, if possible, the injured ones, while women stand waiting. One seldom comes across such subjects. As to that of Roll, I myself assisted at such a scene in all its vividness, and I think the beauty of his picture is that it expresses so accurately such a situation, though one finds but very few of the details in it. I thought of a saying by Corot: "il y a des tableaux où il n'y a rien, et *pourtant tout y est.*" There is something grand and classic in the whole as in a beautiful historical painting, in the composition and in the lines, and that is a quality that remains as rare nowadays as it has always been and will remain. It reminds me a little of Géricault, namely, "Le Radeau de la Méduse," and at the same time of Numkaczy, for instance.

This week I have drawn a few heads and also some children's figures and a few old men from the asylum.

I agree with you in what you say about those small drawings, namely, that the one of the little bench is done more in the old-fashioned way. But I did it more or less on purpose and will perhaps do it again some time. However greatly I may admire many pictures and drawings that are made decidedly with a view to the delicate grey harmonious colour, and the local tone, yet I believe that many artists, who aimed less at this, and are called old-fashioned now, will always remain green and fresh because their manner *had and will keep* its own raison d'être.

To tell you the truth, I couldn't spare either the old- or the new-fashioned way. Too many beautiful things have been made in

both ways than that I should systematically prefer the one to the other. And the changes which the modern brought in art are not in every respect for the better, not everything means progress, neither in the works nor in the artists themselves, and often it seems to me that many lose from sight their starting-point and their aim, or in other words, they do not stick to the point.

Your description of that night effect struck me again as very beautiful. It looks very different here to-day, but it is also beautiful in its way, for instance the grounds near the Rhine station: On the foreground the cinder path with the poplars, that begin to lose their leaves, then the ditch full of duck-weed, with a high bank covered with faded grass and iris, then the grey or brown-grey soil of spaded potato fields, or plots planted with greenish violet-red cabbage, here and there a very fresh green or newly sprouted autumn weed, above which rise bean stalks with faded stems and the reddish or green or black bean pods; behind that stretch of ground the red rusted or black rails in yellow sand; here and there piles of old timber—heaps of coal—discarded railway carriages, over them to the right a few roofs and the freight depot—to the left a view of the far-stretching damp green meadows, shut off far away at the horizon by a greyish streak, in which one can still distinguish trees, red roofs and black factory chimneys. Over it a somewhat yellowish but yet grey sky, very chilly and wintry, that hangs low and from which come bursts of rain now and then, and in which many hungry crows are flying around. Still there falls much light on everything, which shows especially when a few little figures in blue or white smocks move over the grounds, so that shoulders and heads catch the light. I think, however, that in Paris, everything will look much cleaner and less chilly. For the chilliness penetrates even into the house, and when one lights a pipe it seems damp from the drizzling rain. But it is very beautiful.

But it is on such days that one would like to go and see some friend or would like a friend to come to the house, and it is on such days that one has an empty feeling, when one can go nowhere and nobody comes. But just then I feel what the work is to me, how it gives tone to life, apart from approval or disapproval, and on days that otherwise would make one melancholy, one is glad to have an aim.

I had a model for a few hours to-day, a boy with a spade, hod-

carrier by profession, a very curious type, flat nose, thick lips and very coarse, straight hair,—but still whenever he does something there is grace in the figure, at least style and character. I think I will have some good models this winter; the owner of the yard has promised to send me those that come to ask for work, which often happens in the slack season. I readily give them a few quarters for an afternoon or morning, for that is just what I want. I see no other way than to work after the model. Of course one may not extinguish one's power of imagination, but the imagination is made keener and more correct by continually studying nature and wrestling with it. Next Sunday I hope to have again that same boy. I should like to draw him then as when they tow the boats with stones, which one often sees in the canal here.

The working out of doors is over now—I mean the sitting quietly, for it is getting too chilly—so we shall have to take up the winter quarters.

I look forward to the winter with pleasure; it is a delightful season when one can work regularly. I have some hope I shall get on well. I need not tell you that I heartily hope you will get back the money in question. As you know, I carried on the painting and water-colours further than I originally intended, and now I have to pay for it by being hard up. But we will get over that and it may not be a reason for slackening. I vary now by drawing much after the model, though that is also rather expensive, but it fills my portfolios in proportion as it empties my purse.

If about the twentieth of the month you may not have the whole sum, send me part of it; but I would rather receive it a day sooner than later, as I have to pay the rent for the week on that day.

The house continues to please me, except that one wall is very damp. I can work here with a model much better than at the other studio. I can even work with a few persons at the same time, for instance, two children under an umbrella, two women who stand talking, a man and a woman arm-in-arm, etc.

But how short a spring and summer have we really had. Sometimes it seems to me as if there had been nothing between last autumn and this one, but perhaps it is because of my illness lying between. I feel quite normal now except when I am very tired, then I have sometimes a day or half a day when I feel indescribably weak and faint, much more now than before. However, I

do not pay attention to it any longer, for I am getting sick of it, and I can't afford to be ill as I have too much work to do. It often helps me then for instance to take a long walk to Scheveningen or so.

Well, be sure to write about the twentieth, I have had to buy some Whatman paper and brushes. You cannot believe how many things one needs sometimes. Well, the same is the case with every painter.

A handshake in thought, and believe me,

Yours,

Vincent.

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Dear Theo,

It is Sunday again and as rainy as usual. We have had a storm too this week, and there are few leaves left on the trees. I can tell you I am glad the stove is burning. When I happened to arrange my drawings this morning, namely, the studies after the model made since your visit (not counting the older studies or those I drew in my sketch-book), I counted about a hundred.

I mention the number because I remember that you asked me during your visit if I had still more studies than the drawings you saw then. I do not know whether all painters, even those who look down on my work to such a degree, that they think it below themselves to take the least notice of it, work more than I do. Neither do I know if they know a better way than to work from the model, though, in my opinion they do it too little, as I wrote you before I cannot understand why they do not take more models. (Of course I do *not* mean people like Mauve or Israëls—though the latter, in my opinion, gives a splendid example of working always with a model—but I mean, rather, people like de Bock or Breitner). I haven't seen the latter since I visited him in the hospital during his illness. By chance I heard a rumour that he had become a teacher at a high school; from himself I did not hear a single word.

This week I had a letter from Rappard, who also is astonished at the behaviour of many painters here, and whose picture was

refused at the exhibition of Arti.[1] I ask you, is it just that he and I are counted for nothing?

For I assure you that he works hard. This summer he was at Drenthe, and after that he worked quite a time in the hospital for the blind at Utrecht.

It was curious to hear from him some experiences which were almost the same as mine. Well, I often long for you, as I wrote you already. If I saw you oftener and if I could speak to you about the work, I should make more things, which I am sure might proceed from the studies I have. But you remember I wrote to you not long ago (when sending you a sketch in colour of a potato market) " I must try again to paint the bustle of the streets." The result of this is about twelve water-colours which I am making just now, so that I do not want to say that I cannot do anything with my studies, or that I make them without an aim, but only that I believe I could do *more* with them and make them more directly useful if I could sometimes consult you about it.

But however that may be, I work with great pleasure these days, and I hope there will be some things among the work which will please you when you come.

I believe that if one wants to make figures one must have a warm feeling, what " Punch " calls in his Christmas picture: Goodwill to all—that means one must have real love for one's fellow-creatures. I for one hope to try my best to be in such a mood as much as possible.

It is just for that reason that I am sorry not to have any intercourse with painters, and that, as I wrote you before, on a rainy day like to-day one cannot sit cosily together round a fire, looking at drawings or engravings and stimulating each other in that way.

I must ask you something: are there any cheap prints of Daumier to be had, and, if so, which ones? I always found him very clever, but it is only of late that I begin to suppose that he is of greater importance than I thought. If you know any particulars about him or if you have seen any of his important drawings, please tell me about it.

I have seen before now some caricatures of his, and perhaps for that very reason had a different idea of him than the right one. His figures always impressed me, but I think I know but a very

[1] A society of painters in Amsterdam.

small part of his work, and that for instance the caricatures are not at all the usual or most important part of it.

I remember we spoke about it last year on the road to Prinsenhage, and you then said that you liked Daumier better than Gavarni, and I took the part of Gavarni, and told you about the book I had read about Gavarni which you have now, but I must say that since then, though I have not loved Gavarni less, I begin to suspect that I know but a very small part of the work of Daumier, and that *in the part of his work which I do not know* are the very things which would interest me most (though I greatly appreciate already what I know of him). And I have a vague remembrance, but I may be mistaken, that you spoke about large drawings, types or heads of the people, and I am very curious to see them. If there were more things of his as beautiful as a print I recently found. "Les 5 Âges d'un Buveur," or like that figure of an old man under a chestnut tree, which I mentioned to you before, yes, then he would perhaps be the greatest of all. Can you give me perhaps some information about it?

Do you remember the figures by de Groux from the "Uilenspiegel," which I possessed but have lost, alas. Well those two prints by Daumier just mentioned are like them, and if you can find more of them, those are what I mean (for the caricatures I care much less).

I am awfully sorry that I don't have those de Groux and Rops' any more. I gave them away in England with some other things to Richardson, the travelling representative for Goupil and Co.

Well, boy, one thing I can promise you against the time of your arrival, except the water-colours and painted studies, I shall beg you to take the trouble of looking through a portfolio with a hundred drawings, only studies of figures. I have them already even now, if I count some old ones among them. But in the time between now and your arrival, I will try to make some better ones instead of some which are not good enough, and I will try to bring in them some more variation. Good-bye, I heartily wish you some prosperity and happiness. Believe me, with a handshake in thought,

Yours,

Vincent.

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